

CORTEZ;
OR, THE
CONQUEST OF MEXICO:

AS RELATED BY
A FATHER TO HIS CHILDREN,

AND DESIGNED FOR
THE INSTRUCTION OF YOUTH.

(ILLUSTRATED WITH A MAP.)

IN TWO VOLUMES.—VOL. II.

TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN OF
J. H. CAMPE,
(AUTHOR OF THE NEW ROBINSON CRUSOE)

BY
ELIZABETH HELME,

AUTHOR OF
INSTRUCTIVE RAMBLES IN LONDON AND ITS EN-
VIRONS, THE ABRIDGMENT OF PLUTARCH'S
LIVES, ETC. ETC.

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CORTEX

CONQUEST OF MEXICO

FATHER TO HIS CHILDREN

THE INSTRUCTION OF YOUTH

IN TWO VOLUMES—VOL. II.

BY J. H. CAMPBELL

OF THE NEW YORK CHURCH

NEW YORK

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CORTEZ.

DIALOGUE VI.

FERDINAND.

NOW, my dear father, I hope we shall go straight to *Mexico*?

The Father. Perhaps so: we shall soon see the place of our destination. The Spanish army re-enforced by six thousand Tlascalans chosen from among the bravest, was on the point of departing, when in the instant a new embassy arrived from the Emperor Montezuma.

John. I believe he will never cease sending embassies. What could he want now?

VOL. II.

B

Peter.

Peter. Doubtless to prevail on Cortez not to proceed to *Mexico*.

The Father. No; the instructions of the ambassadors were now of another nature. Without pretending absolutely to determine whether or not he was really proceeding to *Mexico*, they simply requested him to go by the way of *Cholula*, as the Emperor, they said, had given orders that he should be received there agreeably to his quality, and provided with all things necessary for him and his army. The Tlascalans considered this invitation as extremely suspicious, and were persuaded that Montezuma was plotting some mischievous design; they in consequence earnestly entreated their European conductor not to expose himself to the dangers that awaited him at *Cholula*.

Peter. Was *Cholula* then in their way to *Mexico*?

The Father. Yes; but it was possible to avoid passing through it. Here it is on the map, about a day's journey from *Tlascala*; and here is *Mexico*. Cortez thanked his Indian friends for their attention; but assured them, that the European warriors were not

accustomed to shun any danger how great soever; he therefore persevered in his plan, and marched right to *Cholula*. His reception there was extremely friendly and honourable; but the Tlascalan auxiliaries, as being the declared enemies of the *Cholulans*, were not permitted to enter the city; he was in consequence obliged to content himself with encamping them without the walls; and as they had already learnt of the Europeans the manner of fortifying themselves by fosses and ramparts, they were very carefully to apply this new acquired knowledge.

The first day was passed in perfect tranquillity; but insensibly some circumstances occurred which appeared but too well to confirm the suspicions of the Tlascalans. Provisions were furnished less abundantly, the Caciques or Governors appeared more distant, and had frequent consultations with the ambassadors of Montezuma. To this was joined the report of two Tlascalans, who by favour of a disguise had found means to slip into the city, and had informed the Spanish General, that during the night they had seen a number of women and children make a

hasty retreat into the environs, and that they had also learnt six young children had been sacrificed in the principal temple; a custom which was always practised when any military enterprise was projected. They therefore advised him to be on his guard, as it was certain something was plotting against him.

While Cortez exerted his utmost vigilance and penetration to fathom the hidden designs of the Cholulans, a lucky accident discovered the whole affair.

A Cholulan woman of distinction had conceived so strong a friendship for the interpreter, Marian, that she was anxious to preserve her from the general destruction in which it was resolved to involve the Spaniards. She therefore confided to her the bloody determination of her countrymen, entreating her to forsake the Europeans while there was yet time. Marian, wholly devoted to the Spaniards, feigned an intention of profiting by this advice, and was thus admitted into the entire confidence of her friend, from whom she learnt that the day destined to the massacre of the Spaniards approached; that a body of *Mexican* soldiers was concealed in the

neighbour-

neighbourhood of *Cholula*, ready to rush forward at a signal given; that several of the streets were already barricaded, and that in others they had dug deep fosses slightly covered to entrap the horses; that, further, on the roofs of the houses and temples they had conveyed a great quantity of stones, and weapons calculated for lanching, in order to crush and wound the Spaniards from above, so that their ruin was inevitable.

Marian hastened to communicate all she had heard to the General, and he lost not an instant in preparing to ward off the threatened danger. The first step he took was to entice the Indian lady and the three principal priests to his dwelling, where by menaces he drew from them a confession of the projected massacre. He now thought it necessary to give an example of vengeance that should for ever deter Montezuma and his adherents from attempting a similar stratagem against him. With this design he arranged his own men, and the Cempoallians that were with him, in the court of the extensive building that had been destined for their residence, and sent orders to the Tlascalans

lans to enter the city on the firing of the first gun. The principal chiefs of the Cholulans were then by divers pretences drawn to the Spanish quarter, and arrested; after which the signal was given, and the massacre began. The Spaniards and the Cempoallians dispersed themselves in the streets, and the Tlascalans at the same instant rushed into the city.

Transported with brutal fury they gave no quarter, but hewed down the inhabitants on every side, so that the carcasses of the slain every where marked the path of their inhuman exterminators. The inhabitants deprived of their chiefs seemed thunder-struck, and scarcely dared raise their trembling hands in their own defence. The concealed body of Mexicans indeed advanced to their support; but they were as easily defeated as the Cholulans, and were constrained, with many of the inhabitants who had escaped the sword of the enemy, to take refuge in the towers and temples. Cortez promised life to all who would voluntarily surrender; but one only profited by the offered pardon, the rest appearing to prefer death to submission. He then resolved on an action from which, my
children

children, let us turn our eyes with pity and horror, that our imagination be not contaminated with the representation of a scene which must cause humanity to shudder. He set fire to the temple, and the multitude of unfortunate Indians who had fled to it for safety became a prey to the flames.

Two whole days were devoted without interruption to this horrid execution, during which the merciless enemy ceased not to burn, pillage, and massacre. At length justice appeared content, the greediness of booty satisfied, and the thirst of blood appeased. Cortez liberated the chiefs he had seized, reproached them with the perfidy which had constrained him to have recourse to so sanguinary a measure, and exacted that the inhabitants who left the city should be recalled and the ancient order established.

In consequence he caused a general pardon to be published, and the idolatrous respect for the Spaniards, which had also seized the Cholulans that remained, soon brought back those who had fled; so that after some days the city again swarmed with inhabitants, who wholly submitting to the will of the conquerors, were ready in every thing to obey

the murderers of their relatives, and the destroyers of their temples.

And now, my children, prepare to behold this undaunted champion, whom we have followed thus far, enter the capital of the empire; but first contemplate the same hand, still dropping with the blood of the murdered Cholulans, perform an action which does equal honour to his humanity and policy. This was no less than establishing peace and friendship between two nations, which had hitherto been irreconcilable enemies. By his orders the Tlascalans and Cholulans were obliged henceforth to cease all hostilities, and to swear, with the ceremonies that are with them held most sacred, a friendship, which on one side put an end to all effusion of blood, and on the other procured the greatest advantages to the Spaniards: for by these pacific measures, in the place of enemies, he left in this country faithful allies, ready, in case of need, to advance to his succour, or at least insured to himself a safe retreat in case his enterprise against Montezuma failed of the expected success. Thus, my children, every good action by which we contribute to the tranquillity of others, fails not in the end

end to produce the same good consequence to ourselves. But now let us proceed to Mexico. Our first station shall be at *Tezcucó*, one of the most considerable cities of the empire. Here it is on this small map*, where also is delineated the lake on which Mexico is situated, and also the most adjacent countries.

Theophilus. Is Mexico then seated in the middle of a lake?

The Father. As you see. This large lake is formed by two others, which are only separated by two strips of land, or narrow causeways: but that which is more surprising is, that one of these lakes contains fresh water, and the other salt; a phenomenon of which the true cause is yet imperfectly known. Some however think that there is at the bottom of the one a great bed of salt, and that it is this which renders the water brackish; an opinion which appears to be most probable.

The Spanish army continued its march with great celerity, and the farther it advanced, the more reason had Cortez to pro-

* The little map is represented on the same sheet as the large one.

mise himself a happy issue to his enterprise. Wherever he halted he heard nothing but complaints against the cruel disposition of Montezuma, and every where found Governors ready to throw off his tyrannic yoke. The disaffection of the Cacique of *Tezcuco* was particularly conspicuous, for he received the Spaniards as tutelary angels sent for the deliverance of his country. Besides, it became more and more evident that the supine Montezuma had lost all courage, and that in his distress he knew not what course to take. One while messengers arrived to invite the Spanish General to *Mexico*; again others appeared to contradict this invitation; then others would follow with permission for him to advance. Cortez however continued his march, without concerning himself either with his invitation or prohibition. He took his route by a mountainous road from *Tezcuco* to *Chalco*, and from thence to *Istapalapa*. You will see both these places on the little map.

Having passed the mountains of *Chalco*, the landscape which opened before them inspired all with transport and admiration. An
extensive

extensive and beautiful country at once broke upon their view, in the midst of which was a lake resembling a sea. On this lake they perceived several cities and hamlets, which appeared to rise out of the bosom of the waters, and in the midst of all, the extensive and rich capital itself, distinguished by the prodigious number of its temples and towers. On the first view of this splendour the Spaniards struck with astonishment stopped, not knowing whether they were awake or in a dream. They imagined themselves transported into some fairy region; so grand and magnificent did this variety of objects appear, which neither their sight nor imagination could embrace at once. From this moment they considered themselves amply recompensed for all they had suffered, and in full possession of immense treasures, all those dangers which had before so much alarmed them, being eclipsed and banished from their minds as a slight mist is dispersed by the first rays of the sun. Cortez with pleasure remarked this general unanimity, and, resolving to profit by it, advanced with the utmost confidence on one of the causeways of the lake,

which led to the superb residence of the Emperor.

A vast multitude of people soon came out of the city to him. There appeared to be more than a thousand, all apparently persons of distinction, wearing mantles of fine cotton, and upon their heads bunches of feathers. They advanced toward the Spanish army in respectful silence, and every individual, as he passed, saluted the General with testimonies of profound veneration. They informed him that Montezuma himself would soon approach, and he soon saw the advanced guard of his magnificent suite. It was composed of two hundred attendants, all dressed in the manner above described, and equally adorned with bunches of feathers. Their feet were bare, and they walked two by two, preserving the most profound silence. As soon as they had gained the front of the Spanish army they halted, and arranged themselves on each side of the wall of the causeway, to admit the view of a band still more magnificent of the Emperor's officers, in the midst of which appeared Montezuma himself, seated in an open chariot of gold. Four of the chief nobles of
his

his empire carried him on their shoulders, while others held over him a canopy skilfully wrought of green feathers, which had to the eye the effect of a green and silver tissue. At the head of this company walked three chiefs bearing golden wands, which from time to time they raised with an air of great solemnity; a signal at which the people covered their faces and prostrated themselves, as unworthy to raise their eyes toward the august person of their Sovereign. When the cavalcade was sufficiently near, Cortez alighted from his horse, and advanced respectfully to meet the Emperor, who in return descended from his litter, and, leaning on the two princes, deigned also to proceed with slow and majestic steps toward the formidable stranger, while his suite spread rich carpets before him, that his royal feet might not be defiled by touching the earth. Cortez accosted him with a noble freedom, and greeted him with profound respect in the European manner. Montezuma returned this compliment by kissing his hand after having touched the ground with it; a salute which in that country is considered as a mark of the highest re-

spect. This condescension from one of the proudest monarchs, who saluted his idols only by a slight inclination of the head, threw the Mexicans into the utmost astonishment, and inspired them wholly with the idea that the strangers were not men, but supernatural beings: in consequence of this the word *Teules*, signifying, as I have already said, *gods* in their language, was frequently heard among them.

Cortez wore over his armour a chain of false jewels, which he designed as a present for Montezuma. As soon therefore as the first salutations were over, he took it off and put it on the neck of the Emperor, who appeared pleased, and immediately replaced it by a collar composed of very scarce shells, ornamented on each side with four golden cray fish; an unexpected condescension, which astonished his subjects still more than the richness of the present, which was considered as one of the most valuable among his treasures.

Montezuma appeared to be about the age of forty, of the middle stature, rather thin than corpulent: his deportment was truly majestic, his countenance animated, and his
complexion

complexion fairer than the generality of the Mexicans. His dress consisted of a mantle of fine cotton, adorned or rather loaded with gold ornaments, pearls, and precious stones. On his head he wore a crown of gold in the form of a bishop's mitre, and on his legs a sort of buskin, covered with plates of the same metal, and fastened with leather thongs and gold buckles.

Montezuma made his entry into the city, with his guest. It was not then called *Mexico*, but *Tenuchtitlan*. It was spacious and well peopled, containing, according to the Spanish historians, about twenty thousand ordinary houses, and a vast number of temples and palaces, the grandeur and magnificence of which surpassed every thing that had till then been seen in the New World, though it seems probable that the historians of those times have often exceeded the bounds of truth in their descriptions of this beautiful city. One of the extensive palaces before-mentioned was assigned for the residence of the Spanish army. Its walls and gates gave it the resemblance of a fortress, and Montezuma himself conducted his guests to it. On

leaving them to enjoy, as he said, repose after their fatigues, he desired them to consider themselves as at home, and among their own brethren. Cortez, however, as usual, posted sentinels and cannon at all the avenues, and exhorted his officers and soldiers to be equally vigilant, and to keep up the same discipline they had observed on former occasions. We will now, with Montezuma, leave them to repose for some hours, and then proceed farther.

DIALOGUE VII.

THE Father. The same evening Montezuma, with his magnificent suite, went to pay the first visit to his highly honoured guest, who was no sooner informed of his approach, than he respectfully went out into the first court to receive him. He saluted him with a profound bow, and conducted him into his apartment, where the Monarch seated him-

self familiarly, and made a sign to the General to do the same.

During this time his attendants arranged themselves against the wall; and the Spaniards, who remained in the apartment, followed the example. Marian, the interpreter, was then called, and the Emperor delivered a solemn speech, in which he endeavoured to efface the ill impressions which the disadvantageous reports concerning him might have made on Cortez. "There are those among my subjects," said he, "who may have told thee that I am descended from the immortal gods; others may have endeavoured to calumniate, and describe me to thee as a haughty and cruel tyrant. The first of these reports," continued he, "deserves as little credit as the last, and the refutation of the one will be sufficient to prove the falsehood of the other." With these words he uncovered his arm, and desired Cortez to convince himself that he was flesh and bone like other men. He then proceeded to assure him that the accounts of his tyranny, by which his enemies endeavoured to render him odious, were equally without foundation. He next declared his sentiments.

timents concerning the origin of the Spaniards, and the cause of their visit, in these terms :

“ We know from traditions, which have been handed down to us from the most remote ages, that our ancestors came from a distant part of the world, and made the conquest of the countries which are now under my dominion. Their chief was the great Zuezalcoal, who, after having founded this empire, quitted it in order to take possession of other countries toward the East ; but he left with us the prophecy that a people, who should descend from him, would one day arrive, and entirely change our laws and government. I now see clearly, from all I have heard and from my own observation, that you are the descendants of our great founder, who has himself foretold your arrival ; and it is on this account that I do not receive you as strangers, but as relatives. I inform you of this, that you may at once acquaint me with the will of the great Monarch of the East, your sovereign, which shall henceforward be a law to me and my subjects.”

Cortez felt inexpressible joy at tidings so favourable

favourable to his views, and was particularly cautious of advancing any thing which might render this supposed origin of the Spaniards doubtful. On the contrary, he confirmed the sentiments of the superstitious Montezuma, that they were the descendants of the great Zuezalcoal, who had foretold their arrival; and then added:—"Though it is evident that the Supreme Monarch of the East, whose meanest servant I have the honour to be, has by his descent just claims to all these countries, he is far from wishing to avail himself of his rights: he desires nothing of you, and your people, but that for your own interest you forego your errors, and embrace the true religion, which he causes me to announce. Know then, that you are deluded; that you follow a false worship; that you pay adoration to inanimate blocks, the inventions of your priests, and the work of your own hands. There is but *one* true God, who created and preserves all things. This Great Being, without beginning and without end, formed the whole universe; all those luminous bodies which enlighten us, the earth, with all it contains, and the first man, from whom

whom we are all descended. It is to the worship of this God, great Emperor, that the King my sovereign, from sentiments of the purest humanity, calls you and your people. This is what he requires; after which, he will form with you a perpetual alliance, which cannot but prove of the utmost advantage to you and to your whole people."

During this speech Montezuma was visibly agitated; he could not, without indignation, hear his gods spoken of contemptuously, and with difficulty contained himself till Cortez ceased speaking. He then rose hastily, and replied, "that he received the proposition of an alliance with a prince descended from the great Zuezalcoal with the utmost gratitude and pleasure; but, with respect to the gods, the one that the Spaniards adored might possess all the power he attributed to him, without in the least lessening the merit of his." With these words he broke off the conference, and, after having distributed some magnificent presents, returned to his palace. The next day Cortez was conducted to an audience with great pomp, accompanied by his principal officers.

Frederic

Frederic. What does an audience mean, father?

The Father. Simply that he was conducted into the presence of the Emperor to converse with him.—This interview continued longer than the former; Montezuma asked a number of questions concerning the manners and customs of the Europeans; and Cortez, who had nothing so much at heart as the conversion he had projected, seized all occasions to turn the discourse upon religion. Above all, he declaimed loudly against the horrid custom of sacrificing men, and feeding upon the flesh of our brethren. He did not yet attempt to make his Mexican Majesty understand that he must regard even his enemies as brethren; but his arguments in this interview so far prevailed, that the Emperor caused human flesh to be excluded from his own table.

After this, Montezuma, desirous of showing his guests the grandeur of his temples, conducted them into the most spacious; the priests permitting them to enter, upon condition that they behaved with decency. Montezuma himself took the trouble of showing and explaining every thing to them; he told them

them the names of the idols, the largest of which he called Vizlipuzli, and described the manner of worship that was peculiar to each.

[Vizlipuzli appeared to the Children so ridiculous a name, that they all burst into a loud laugh: their father therefore was obliged to make a short pause, after which he continued.]

What you have just experienced happened to some of the Spaniards when Montezuma was recounting to them the absurdities of the worship of the Mexican idols: they burst into a loud laugh. Do you think this conduct was proper?

Some of the Children confused. No.

The Father. Why so?

John. Because it is wrong to ridicule what others hold sacred.

The Father. Why do you judge so?

John. Because it is vexatious and humiliating to hear what we think sacred laughed at.

The Father. But suppose it to be any thing really absurd?

John. Should that even be the case, all do not see with the same eyes.

The Father. You are perfectly right, my dear boy. Never should we permit ourselves the

the license of ridiculing, even in jest, what a single person among our associates considers as belonging to religion; for what can be more distressing to persons truly devout than to see those objects treated with contempt, and turned into ridicule, which they are accustomed to hold in the highest veneration; which afford them consolation in all their troubles; which incite them to the practice of virtue; and, finally, which inspire them with the hope of a happy futurity? How gross soever, therefore, may be the error or absurdity, the reflection that one of our brothers holds it as sacred, should be sufficient to retain us within the bounds of gravity, at least in his presence. Attend seriously, my children, to this precept; for, in your intercourse with the world, you will often associate with men whose religion and form of worship will be different from that in which you have been educated, and will often appear ridiculous: but on these occasions recollect the advice I now give you, and be careful never to say or do any thing that can be construed into ridicule. Compassion is the only sentiment we should feel on perceiving our neighbour

neighbour in error: to laugh, jest, and ridicule his failing, is a real cruelty, which during life we should carefully avoid.—But to return. Montezuma, by a look of gravity, recalled the Spaniards, who insulted him by their risibility, to a sense of decorum; but Cortez himself soon after put Montezuma's patience to a still greater trial, on an occasion equally absurd. He told the Emperor, that if he would permit him to erect the cross of Jesus Christ in the midst of this idolatrous temple, he would soon see that his false gods could not support its presence. I call this proposition absurd, as much because it was not made in its proper time or place, as because it implied a visible inconsistency; for why should not the inanimate forms of idols support the presence of a cross equally inanimate? Or could Cortez suppose, that from the moment the cross of Jesus Christ should be erected, the idols would be broken by a sudden miracle? However this might be, Montezuma heard the proposal with indignation, and the priests with horror. The former had nevertheless the art of restraining himself, and simply replied, that he should,

at least, have expected his guests not to forget the respect due to his person in the place where they were. With these words he withdrew, telling the Spaniards that they might return to their quarter, but that he should remain and implore pardon of his gods for the forbearance he had exercised towards those who had so highly insulted them.

John. Well said, Montezuma.

The Father. This dismissal was but too well merited; but that you may not encourage an inclination for laughter whenever the idolatrous worship of these poor ignorant Indians is spoken of, I shall give you a slight sketch of their feasts of sacrifices, which is indeed one of the most horrid pictures to which human superstition ever gave birth. Your blood, my children, will run cold with horror at the description, and you will feel that you have reason to thank God for having brought you into existence in an age in which, if this abominable worship of idols is not wholly extinct, it is, at least, less extensive.

Human sacrifices constituted the principal part of the religious rites of the Mexicans, who

who often made war on a neighbouring people for the sole purpose of taking prisoners, whom they might sacrifice on their altars, and afterwards feast upon. In battle they preserved the lives of their enemies for no other purpose than that they might perish in a manner still more cruel, by the knives of their priests. These wretched victims immolated on the same day often amounted to some thousands; there are writers who assert even to the number of twenty-five thousand; but this account is probably exaggerated. If the nation had been at peace for any length of time, and prisoners were consequently wanting to sacrifice, the priests represented to the Emperor that their gods were hungry, and immediately the imperial mandate was issued throughout the country that the gods were desirous of making a feast; a declaration which served as a signal of universal war against every neighbouring people. As soon as a sufficient number of prisoners were taken, the sanguinary priests proceeded to their abominable festival in the following manner:

The unfortunate victims were brought into a space before the porch of the temple: soon after

after the sacrificer appeared, dressed in a white robe, bearing a small idol made of wheat flour and honey, and which, to render it more terrific, had green eyes and yellow teeth. He immediately ascended a stone which raised him above the wall, and from thence showed to each of the prisoners this frightful figure, at the same time repeating these words: *Behold your God*. He then descended, put himself at the head of the prisoners, and marched with them toward the place where the other sacrificers were assembled. The principal of these barbarians, who had the direction of these infamous sacrifices, and who was honoured with the title of *Iopilzin*, was clothed in a long robe fringed with rags of the colour of blood, and wore on his head a crown of green and yellow plumes, his ears and under lip being ornamented with gold rings mounted with green stones. His face was blacked, and in his murderous hand he grasped a knife formed of a large sharp flint. Five more of these inhuman butchers, in their sacerdotal habiliments, stood behind him, each ready to discharge the function assigned him. The unfortunate prisoners then advanced

advanced naked, one after another, and were dispatched on a large stone destined for the horrid purpose. The first being seized and stretched out, two of the sacrificers held his hands, two others his feet, the fifth his neck, by means of a collar, which had been put there for that purpose; and the sixth priest, I shudder to relate it, supporting himself by his left hand on the breast of the wretched victim, with the right ripped open the body, and, taking out the heart, still beating, held it to the Sun to offer the vapours that arose from it.

[The Father observing his children affected by this horrid picture, for some minutes ceased, after which he continued.]

This horrid execution was no sooner finished, than the murderous Iopilzin turned toward the idol, and rubbed his frightful visage with the heart of the victim, muttering some mysterious words. In the mean while, the other priests took the corpse, and threw it at the foot of the steps, where those remained who had conducted the prisoners, and to whom the carcases belonged. They eagerly seized the bodies that were thrown them,
carried

carried them to their dwellings, and feasted on them with their friends. Horrible, my children, as this may appear, you must prepare for a scene still more so. These wretched men, so deeply immersed in the most barbarous superstition, at a certain season celebrated a festival, to which they gave a name which in English we can only render by that of the *Feast of slaying or skinning of men*. Their manner of celebrating this festival was conformable to the abominable name it bore. The priests flayed the prisoners destined to be sacrificed, and covered the servants of the temple with their skins, in the manner of a cloak. Thus arrayed, they ran through the city dancing and singing before every house, the inhabitants of which were obliged each to bestow an alms for their priests; for, if any one refused to contribute, they struck him on the face with the flap of the skin till he was completely smeared with blood. This public extortion, which enriched the priests, continued till the skin began to putrefy. Endeavour now, my children, to surmount the disagreeable impression this description must have made on you. I should have scrupled
to

to shock you by a recital of the enormities to which superstition can conduct mankind, if it did not at the same time furnish us with a key to the mystery, why Divine Providence should permit a handful of adventurers to attack so numerous a people; to vanquish them, bend them beneath their yoke, and condemn them to a life of misery and hardship. The variety of plagues which the ambitious Europeans brought upon the inhabitants of the New World were undoubtedly a very great evil; but if they are compared with the cruelties which superstition such as we have described dared commit with impunity, we cannot forbear confessing that these unfortunate people gained as much as they lost by the imposition of the Spanish yoke. Let us therefore rest satisfied with the feeble ray of light afforded us by the Most High to develop his providence in this instance, till the time shall arrive in which the thick darkness which now obscures our understanding shall be dissipated, and this and every other proceeding of his wisdom openly revealed and justified to man. But now to return to Cortez. The first impulse of joy occasioned by

the happy success of his formidable enterprise was scarcely over, when he began to reflect upon the danger into which his temerity had plunged him. He now saw but too clearly that he had hazarded more than he ought to have done, and that his own fate, and that of his army, were in the hands of a prince whose real sentiments respecting him had always appeared equivocal. The Tlascalans had, from the first, never ceased exhorting him to be on his guard; expressing their fears that Montezuma would not have consented to give him entrance into the city, had he not prepared a snare from which he thought it impossible for him to escape. The character of this prince, and the particular situation of the city, gave a great degree of probability to this idea; for it was only necessary to break down the bridges built over the dykes of the lake, and Cortez would find himself, with his little army, entirely separated from the main land, and surrounded by an innumerable people, against whom neither his courage nor his arms was sufficient to secure him. To this subject of inquietude was added a very unfortunate incident which happened at *Vera Cruz*, and

of which Cortez had received information a little before his arrival at *Mexico*. Qualpopoca, one of the Mexican Generals, at the head of a considerable corps, had resolved (after the departure of Cortez) to punish the natives who had thrown off the dominion of his master, and put themselves under the protection of the Spaniards. Escalante, Governor of *Vera Cruz*, considering it his duty to assist his allies, joined their army with the small number of troops under his command, and the two horsemen that were left with him, and gave battle to Qualpopoca. Escalante indeed gained the victory, but had at the same time the misfortune to be mortally wounded, with seven other Spaniards. This was not all; for one of the horses was not only killed, but his rider fell into the hands of the enemy, who put their prisoner to death, and carried his head in triumph throughout the different cities of the empire, as an indubitable proof that the Spaniards were not invulnerable; after which they had sent it to *Mexico*.

Cortez, whom all this with reason disquieted, gave orders that no one should intrude

trude upon his privacy, and passed the succeeding night in reflecting on the most prudent measures he could adopt to ward off the danger that appeared to threaten him. Toward morning he sent for some faithful Tlascalans, to inform himself whether they had remarked or heard any thing that might develop the designs of Montezuma. Their answer confirmed his suspicions, and at the same time the resolution he had already formed. Their intelligence was this: that for some time past the grandees of the empire had pursued a mysterious conduct; that farther, the head of a Spaniard had been sent from a distant province, and that the Emperor had given strict orders it should be carefully concealed—To conclude, they maintained having heard that Montezuma had it in agitation to break down the bridges of the dykes. This was enough for Cortez; his resolution was fixed, and he set about convincing his officers that it was the sole means left for their preservation.

Nicholas. What could be his design?

The Father. Endeavour to guess; imagine yourselves in his place; recollect every circumstance,

cumstance, and then put the question to yourselves: If I had been in the situation of Cortez, what steps should I have taken to extricate myself from the dilemma? To-morrow when we meet at the usual hour, each of you will tell me his sentiments; and then, if one among you discover the alternative Cortez chose, I will continue my history; otherwise we must set apart twenty-four hours for reflection.

Some of the Children exclaim, Oh, I am sure I shall guess it!

Others. And so shall I!

The Father. Well, I shall be delighted if you all prove successful. To-morrow therefore be prepared.

DIALOGUE VIII.

THE next day, when the good father summoned his little flock, visible signs of agitation were seen among them, each appeared to have

have ready at the end of his tongue the sentiment he wished to disclose; but their father had forbid any one to deliver his opinion till he was asked in full assembly. This restraint therefore occasioned no small perturbation among them; their hands, their feet, the muscles of their faces were in motion; all was expectation and impatience. Their father, who, as I have elsewhere remarked, whenever he saw his young auditors unwilling to submit to the curb of reason, always took care to exercise their patience, advanced with so snail-like a pace, that it was absolutely enough to try the temper of the most patient. At length, having prolonged the time upon various frivolous pretences, such as stopping to put aside various things that did not in the least incommode him, and blowing his nose ten times when once would have sufficed, he seated himself, and, addressing his young auditors, whose expectation was all this time on tiptoe, "Well, Henry," said he, "what should you have done had you been in the place of Cortez?"

Henry. I should immediately have told Montezuma what I heard; and at the same

time have fixed my eye on him to see if he changed colour. If I had observed any alteration in his countenance, I should have judged that he was guilty, and have declared open war against him.

Theophilus. For my part, I should have withdrawn with my people to some place of safety while it was yet in my power.

Ferdinand. Oh fye, John, what a coward! No, I would have sent a small detachment with a couple of cannon to the bank, to prevent any of the bridges being destroyed, and then I warrant I should have managed those within the city.

Some of the rest exclaim, That would have been my way.

The Father. And what would you have done, Frederic?

Frederic. I, father? I should have cut off Montezuma's head!

The Father. Heaven preserve us! What, so cruel, Frederic?

Frederic, with warmth. Yes, father. Why should he endeavour to kill me and my men?

The Father. But it was not yet positively decided

decided whether such was really the intention of Montezuma. It was only suspected.

Frederic. Well, but I would first have been certain.

The Father. That would undoubtedly have been prudent; you might otherwise have committed an act of injustice.

Peter. Now, dear father, I may speak?

The Father. Certainly; now 'tis your turn.

Peter. I should have rendered myself master of the person of Montezuma, and would have treated him according to his rank; but I would not have set him at liberty till I had been perfectly free from all fears concerning him.

The Father. Did this idea, Peter, really proceed from hence? (*Touching his forehead.*)

Peter, laughing. No, dear father. I must needs confess, when I was with my uncle, I one day read some extracts from the history.

The Father. Your sagacity is easily accounted for then; but as your sincerity merits approbation, we must look upon the idea as your own: I shall therefore continue my narrative, and inform you that it was this resolution Cortez adopted. He determined to

make the powerful Montezuma a prisoner in his capital, though surrounded by thousands of his subjects, who almost idolized him. Tell me, my children, did you ever hear of an example of audacity that can be compared with this?

Christian. Indeed, my dear father, it surpasses every thing.

The Father. This daring project was no sooner formed, and approved by all the chiefs, than they proceeded to its immediate execution. All the Spanish corps was put under arms in the space belonging to their quarter, to be ready on the first signal to fly to the succour of their General. Some small detachments were placed in the streets that led to the palace of Montezuma; a step which it was well known would create no suspicion on the part of the Mexicans, who were accustomed to see the Spaniards at all times armed. When the hour was come at which Cortez usually went to pay his court to the Emperor, he repaired to the palace, accompanied by five of his officers, and thirty of the bravest men of his army. This proceeding also was viewed by the Mexicans with indifference,

ference, as they had been for some time accustomed to the military parade which usually attended the Spanish General.

Cortez was as usual received with respect, and immediately introduced into the apartment of Montezuma, with his officers and interpreters. The attendants then withdrew, and the conversation began. Cortez complained of the perfidy of Qualpopoca, in a manner that testified the greatest displeasure; he urged, that in the time of peace, and contrary to all the rights of nations, he attacked his troops, and those of his allies, and that merely from cruelty and thirst of blood he had murdered a Spanish prisoner, and sent his head in procession throughout the country. He added, that public report named him Montezuma as the author of this flagrant injustice; and that in consequence he felt himself obliged to demand satisfaction for the affront that had, by these means, been done to his Sovereign, the greatest prince in the universe.

This discourse alarmed Montezuma so much, that he grew pale; but he swore by every thing he held most sacred, that he had

not the least hand in the disagreeable event he complained of; and added, that as a proof of his innocence he would immediately give orders for Qualpopoca and his accomplices to be arrested and conducted to Mexico.

On this proposition Cortez resumed a friendly aspect, and assured him, that for his part he should be perfectly content with this single explanation; but that for the satisfaction of his soldiers, who were highly incensed, something more was necessary. It would never be possible, he said, to persuade them that such an event could happen without the knowledge and approbation of the Emperor, unless his Majesty would consent to give a public proof of his confidence and friendship for the Spaniards, by passing some days in their quarter, where he should be attended with all the veneration due to his august person.

At this extraordinary demand Montezuma was overpowered with astonishment and rage: he was incapable of articulating a word, and remained motionless as a statue, while Cortez continued to represent to him that there was
nothing

nothing in this request indecorous, or in the least derogatory from his dignity, as the quarter that had been assigned the Spaniards was one of his palaces, where it was often customary with him to pass some days.

At length Montezuma, having somewhat recovered from his surprise, proceeded with great warmth to express his resentment. It was not usual, he said with affected dignity, for a Sovereign of the Mexican Empire to resign himself voluntarily into a prison; and that, should he even be capable of submitting to a meanness of this kind, his subjects would not permit him to undergo such an indignity.

Cortez, who did not wish to employ violence, had alternately recourse to the most flattering promises and the severest menaces, in order to prevail on him to comply with his demand. But all was in vain. At length, after three hours contest, Valasquez de Leon, a young Spanish officer, exclaimed, with an air of impatience and defiance, "Where is the end of so much ceremony? Let us seize him by force, or let him perish at our feet." Montezuma desired to know what that angry

man said, and Marian satisfied his curiosity; adding, that she trembled for his life if he did not that instant surrender.

This effectually subdued the courage of the unfortunate prince; he saw that he was in the power of these formidable strangers, and that he had to expect the last extremities if he longer resisted. He yielded therefore to necessity, and, leaping from his seat, told Cortez that he relied upon his assurances, and consented to go with him.

The chiefs of the empire were immediately by his order assembled; when he himself informed them, that for certain important reasons he should go and remain some days with his guests. The chiefs were greatly astonished at so unexpected and dangerous a resolution, but did not venture the least opposition to the will of their Sovereign. A litter was then brought, and the unfortunate Montezuma was borne as a prisoner by his own attendants, escorted by a guard of Spaniards. Scarcely was the noise of his removal spread throughout the city, than the streets swarmed with people, whose air and gestures were expressive of the greatest grief and

and terror. Some shrieked, others wept, and others threw themselves on the ground overwhelmed with the deepest affliction. Montezuma endeavoured to calm them by assuming a cheerful countenance, and assuring them that he was not a prisoner, but was going with his own consent to pass some days with his guests, and partake of their amusements. This explanation in some measure composed them, and the Spaniards continued without interruption to advance with their illustrious prisoner till they arrived safe at their own quarters. Here Montezuma made choice of an apartment; and the Spaniards, by order of their General, waited on him with the most profound respect. Soon after he sent some of his officers into the streets to call in the people, whom he commanded under pain of death to remain quiet, repeating the assurance that his residence with the Spaniards was entirely with his own inclination, and that he meant to continue with them some days. After this, in presence of Cortez, he dispatched some captains of his guard to bring Qualpopoca, and the other chiefs of
the

the army who were his accomplices, prisoners to *Mexico*.

Cortez in the interval exerted every effort to render the captivity of the unfortunate Emperor supportable. Not only his officers, but the most considerable men of the empire had free access to his person; but the precaution was taken of not suffering too great a number to enter at a time, on pretence of preventing confusion. Montezuma himself continued to preserve an air of gaiety, in order the more effectually to conceal from his subjects the humiliating condition to which he was reduced. He even treated his jailors the Spaniards with a friendship and generosity sufficient to confirm every one in the opinion that his confinement was voluntary, and that they had given him no cause of offence. In the meanwhile Qualpopoca, his son, and five of his captains, were brought to *Mexico*. Montezuma, who persisted in maintaining that he had no hand in what they had done, left to the Spaniards the investigation of their crime, and the care of inflicting on them a proportionate punishment. Cortez

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in consequence summoned a council of war, which proceeded to the trial of the unfortunate chiefs, who were found guilty of having violated the rights of nations, and condemned—to be burnt alive! Such was their fidelity to their unfortunate Sovereign, that they till now stedfastly averred having received no orders for what they had done; but when the dreadful sentence of death was pronounced, their courage forsook them, and they affirmed what they had before denied. Cortez, however, unwilling to hear farther explanations, ordered them to immediate execution.

You are without doubt, my children, astonished at the unheard-of audacity with which Cortez, in the midst of the well-peopled capital of a monarch whose power was far from contemptible, first rendered himself master of his person, and then arrogated to himself a jurisdiction which could alone appertain to the legislative power of the country; but suspend your astonishment a little longer, when you will hear something still more worthy of exciting it.

Cortez, as if resolved to carry the affront given to the humiliated prince to the highest pitch,

pitch, as also the mockery of his former power, in the presence of the people commanded, by his own authority, a grand arsenal of the Mexicans, in which a great quantity of javelins, bucklers, and other military equipage were preserved, to be emptied, in order to erect with them a funeral pile for the execution of those who were probably guilty of no other crime than that of having obeyed the orders of their lawful Sovereign. At length all was prepared, and the weapons so long preserved for the defence of the Empire were heaped together to furnish fuel to complete the tragedy. The victims were at length brought forth, and innumerable spectators assembled in the utmost consternation. In the interval, Cortez, accompanied by some officers, and a soldier bearing fetters, entered the apartment of Montezuma. He approached him with an incensed air, and informed him that the criminals had declared that he, Montezuma, was the sole cause of the atrocious act they had committed, and that in consequence justice required that he also should be punished for the crime he had authorized. Scarcely had he pronounced

these

these dreadful words, when he turned his back on the terrified prince, thus fallen from the height of his greatness, and the soldier put on him the ignominious fetters. What do you think of this act, my children?

The Children, with disgust and indignation,
Oh, shameful! abominable!

The Father. Poor Montezuma appeared annihilated, while mute and confounded he suffered them to perform what he had no power to prevent; but at length his recollection returning, he burst into lamentations and groans, expecting they were going to conduct him to the stake. The most affecting part of this scene was the conduct of his faithful attendants, who in silent grief fell at his feet, and bathed them with tears. They supported the fetters to lessen their weight, putting between them and his skin bits of soft cotton, that his limbs thus profaned might not feel the pressure of the iron. This was a scene sufficient to draw tears of compassion from the most unfeeling spectator.

The execution of the Mexican chiefs being over, Cortez returned, and approaching Montezuma with a friendly air told him, that
justice

justice was now satisfied, and that in consequence his crime also was effaced. With these words he caused his fetters to be taken off. The soul of the depressed monarch now experienced a sudden transition from the deepest grief to the highest excess of joy; he embraced his persecutor repeatedly, and gave him the most lively assurances of his gratitude for the deliverance he had obtained for him. Unfortunate prince! in the excess of his joy he seemed to forget that the man who caused his fetters to be removed was the same who had before placed them on his limbs.

John. I have long wondered what could induce Cortez to sport thus with the unfortunate Montezuma. Was it from mere wickedness?

The Father. It is not easy to discover. Perhaps his design was so far to confound and intimidate the already enfeebled spirit of Montezuma, by his boldness and reiterated ill-treatment, as to render it susceptible of no courageous resolution. In this he succeeded to his wish; and the security and power of the Spaniards in *Mexico* appeared to be established on a sure foundation. But this was

not

not enough for the wary Cortez; he was constantly projecting the means of opening to himself a free passage out of the city, where he was inclosed as in an island; a passage which should be always at his disposal, even should the Mexicans form the resolution of destroying the bridges of the dykes that led from the city. With this design he often conversed with Montezuma on the singular construction of the European vessels, in order to inspire him with the desire of seeing these extraordinary barks. This end was soon attained; Montezuma was extremely curious to behold one of these vessels, and Cortez engaged to procure him that pleasure. By the Emperor's order a sufficient number of carriers were sent to *Vera Cruz*, to bring to *Mexico* the wrecks of the Spanish vessels which had been preserved; others were sent into the forests to hew the necessary timber; and in a short time the Spanish carpenters had built two brigantines, on board of which the captive monarch was often taken for his recreation. Cortez made use of these trips to obtain a knowledge of the situation of the Lake and its environs; a knowledge which in the end proved

proved of the utmost importance to him. And now his enterprising spirit proceeded with bolder steps to the entire reduction of the Mexican empire. He dispatched his officers into different parts of the country, as much to discover the extent and situation of each province, as to remark the districts in which gold and silver were to be found. He had also the art of persuading Montezuma, on different pretexts, to depose the most skilful and courageous of his officers, and to replace them by others whose ignorance and cowardice left the Spaniards nothing to fear from their exertions. At length he made the last afflicting proposition to this repeatedly degraded monarch—that of publicly acknowledging himself vassal to the King of *Spain*, and consenting to pay him an annual tribute as a mark of his dependance.

What could the unfortunate Montezuma do? His liberty, his life itself was in the hands of Cortez: he was therefore constrained patiently to consent to every demand how humiliating soever.

The chiefs of the empire were in consequence assembled; when Montezuma recalled

to their remembrance the ancient prophecy, which was now accomplished, and declared to them, that from this time he should hold himself and his whole empire as dependant on the great King of the East, to whom the sovereignty, according to the order of their common father, belonged. The tears which suffused his eyes in pronouncing these words, clearly proved how dear the sacrifice he then made cost him. A confused murmur rose in the assembly of Mexicans; astonishment and chagrin were strongly delineated on every countenance, and a general inclination appeared to support by force the violated rights of the Nation and Sovereign; but Cortez artfully appeased the commotion, by affirming, that the intention of his King was by no means to deprive Montezuma of the empire, but simply to become its protector. - This assurance added to the example of the Emperor, who voluntarily submitted, calmed the tumult, and they proceeded without interruption to the performance of all the ceremonies which the Spaniards thought proper to exact, in order to render the submission of Montezuma public and solemn; after which this unfortunate

fortunate prince confirmed his homage to the King of Spain by a considerable present, and summoned the Caciques of every district to do the same.

DIALOGUE IX.

THE Father. Cortez now proceeded to a distribution of the treasures that had been amassed: he caused all the gold dust and ornaments to be melted into ingots, and found that the weight amounted to six hundred thousand marks.

Theophilus. A silver mark of *Lubec* or *Denmark*?

The Father. Neither; when we speak of a silver mark we do not understand the money that is in currency at *Hamburgh* or in *Denmark*, and which bears that name; but a weight of eight ounces, or half a pound. Six hundred thousand marks, therefore, make three hundred thousand pounds weight; but

the money would amount to no more than five hundred marks, or two hundred and fifty pounds.

Theophilus. Gold is then at *Mexico* more common than silver?

The Father. Not at present ; but the reason why the Mexicans had then more gold than silver was, because gold was more frequently found pure than silver. Perhaps however you do not know what is meant by pure silver?

Theophilus. O yes, father ; when it is found without any mixture.

The Father. You are right. Silver is usually taken from the mines in the gross metal, and is first by means of fire purified from the heterogeneous matters that are mixed with it ; but this art was entirely unknown to the Mexicans. The gold and silver they possessed Nature herself purified, and they had only simply to collect it ; yet even in this research, which was made in the sands of the rivers, and in the earth of the gold mines, they worked with extreme negligence, because gold had not with them the value we attach to it. They made use of it only for different sorts of ornaments, and even for this they took

took little trouble to seek it. For this reason, the quantity of gold that was amassed, and now to be divided, was not nearly sufficient to satisfy the cupidity of the Spaniards. Cortez divided the whole treasure into five parts: the first he destined to the King of Spain; the second he kept for himself as General, according to former precedents; the third was reserved to indemnify those who had supported the expence of the equipment for the enterprize; and the two other parts were divided among the troops. The portion allotted to each soldier or sailor was not therefore so considerable as was expected, and this caused a general murmur; but Cortez immediately giving up a part of his share to satisfy the wishes of his men, their discontent subsided.

The unfortunate Montezuma had, as I have before told you, acceded to all the demands of his persecutor, how hard and humiliating soever; in one point only Cortez found him firm and unshaken. This was upon what regarded his own and the religious faith of his people, a subject upon which neither flatteries nor menaces could induce

him

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him to alter his sentiments. In vain Cortez, animated with his usual zeal, essayed all his eloquence to impress him with a sense of the absurdity and horror of the idolatrous worship, and to enforce the mild doctrines of christianity. He remained inflexible, and the conversation always terminated with the request that he would spare him the pain of demands of this nature. At length Cortez became so far incensed, that he was resolved to attack the idolatry of the Mexicans, not only by argument, but by the sword. With this design he conducted his troops to the principal temple, intending to overthrow the idols, and to destroy every thing that had any relation to their worship: but, to his great astonishment, he found the numerous body of priests under arms ready to shed the last drop of their blood in defence of the idols; he also observed a large band of armed Mexicans advance to support them, and could not but acknowledge that in this instance his zeal had carried him beyond his prudence. He contented himself, therefore, with substituting in the place of one idol, which he had thrown from its niche, an image of the Virgin Mary,

and remitted to a more favourable opportunity his enthusiastic project of conversion.

This incident at once opened the eyes of the Mexicans: they now saw clearly what they had to expect from the audacity of those strangers formerly so revered, and began to reflect on the means of driving them from the city, and of freeing themselves from their yoke. The priests and the chiefs of the nation, who now, in greater numbers than before, had frequent secret conferences with the captive Emperor, cried aloud for vengeance for the affront offered to their gods, and the fate of Montezuma became still more critical and dangerous. What resolution could he take? or whither have recourse for redress? Should he appeal to his subjects, he would incur the danger of being murdered by his persecutors, in whose power he remained; and to apply for protection to his oppressors he had reason to fear the revolt of his whole empire; besides which, their conduct toward him had sufficiently shown what he might expect from their generosity or friendship. Thus undecided, like a feeble reed before the wind, having long been agitated by contend-

ing interests, he at length took courage, and resolved to pursue the middle path, which prudence suggested to him as the most safe. With this design he sent for Cortez, who having conceived some distrust from the secret interviews of his illustrious captive with the priests and chiefs of the empire, took the precaution of attending his summons accompanied by twelve of his bravest men. His suspicions increased on entering the apartment of Montezuma, and reading in his countenance an expression of gloom he had never before perceived. He was still more surprised when Montezuma, taking his hand, and drawing him aside, observed to him in an authoritative and almost menacing tone, "that since the end for which his Sovereign had sent him was now fully accomplished, he hoped he would think of hastening his departure."

This unexpected discourse, and still more the gloomy air that accompanied it, and the resolute tone in which it was pronounced, alarmed Cortez so far, that he turned to his officers, and gave them a secret order immediately to put all his men under arms: then resuming his usual firmness, he answered the

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monarch

monarch with an air of indifference, that he desired nothing more ardently than to return to his country; but that his vessels having been destroyed, as he (Montezuma) well knew, he must first build others, and prayed him to grant him the necessary succours. Montezuma was unable to conceal the excess of his joy at this unhopcd-for reply; he threw himself on the neck of the General, overwhelmed him with caresses, and assured him this declaration was sufficient to satisfy the gods, and his subjects, who equally insisted on the departure of the Spaniards. This reply informed Cortez of the true sentiments of the priests with a degree of certainty that gave him uneasiness, and he thought himself under a necessity of averting the threatened danger, and securing the success of his enterprise, by carefully continuing to conceal his real intentions. With this design, he gave public orders to build some vessels with the utmost dispatch; but he privately commanded his carpenter to retard the completion of them as much as possible by every obstacle that they could raise, in the hope that during that time the reinforcement he expected from

Spain

Spain would arrive. But, as if the vengeance of heaven pursued this unjust proceeding, an event happened soon after which suddenly plunged Cortez in the most desperate situation.

Montezuma one day sent for him in haste, and showed him a picture drawn after the Mexican manner upon white cotton, representing eighteen European vessels. This picture had been brought to the Emperor by his messengers, with the news that the vessels there represented were at anchor on his coasts.

Cortez was transported with this intelligence; for he flattered himself that the vessels brought him the expected reinforcement from Spain, with the confirmation from the Court of his appointment of Governor of the countries he had discovered. But what was his astonishment, when he received intelligence some days after from Sandoval, resident Governor of *Vera Cruz*, the distressing tidings that the squadron arrived had been equipped by Valasquez, in order to take him and his partisans prisoner, and to convey them to *Cuba* as traitors deserving punishment! The manner in which Valasquez had obtained in-

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telligence

telligence of their station was this: Cortez, as you must remember, dispatched one of his vessels to *Spain* with the specimens he had amassed of the riches of *Mexico*, and at the same time to obtain the royal assent to his government of these countries. Montejo and Portocarrero, the commanders of this vessel, received express orders from Cortez not to touch at the Isle of *Cuba* in their passage; they were, on the contrary, to leave this island on the right as much as possible, and turn the point of *Florida* (observe it on the first map) by the *Canal of Bahama*: the passage between *Florida* and the *Bahama Isles* is so called. Montejo, who had possessions in *Cuba*, so far forgot his duty as to neglect the command of his General in order to enjoy the pleasure of visiting his estate before he sailed for *Spain*. Scarcely had he appeared on the coast, when Valasquez, who since the departure of Cortez had been a prey to rage, repentance, and jealousy, dispatched two well-armed vessels to seize the ship and all its crew; but they were happily informed of their danger time enough to escape, and continued their voyage to *Spain* without interruption.

ruption. Valasquez' rage was now inflamed to the highest pitch, and he resolved to equip a powerful fleet in order to seek out Cortez in what place soever he should be, and wreak on him the severity of his vengeance. While he was preparing this equipment, he received news from *Spain* that the vessel which had escaped him was safely arrived, and at the same time was informed of the country where Cortez was, and of the success of his expedition. The equipment of the fleet was now carried on with greater ardour; it was composed of eighteen vessels, having on board eight hundred foot, eighty horsemen, and twelve cannon, a force truly formidable for that time and that part of the world, and nearly doubling that of Cortez.

The fleet being ready, the command, with the title of Sub-Governor of the countries discovered by Cortez, was given to Narvaez, an officer of courage, but passionate and irreconcilable. The unexpected arrival of this fleet was the intelligence Cortez had just received. And now, my children, endeavour to represent to yourselves the perilous condition of our hero, whose situation became

every day more critical. He must either march to the encounter of an European army twice as powerful as his own, or abandon *Mexico*, and renounce all the advantages which he had acquired at the expence of so many fatigues and dangers. But how could he hope to vanquish an enemy equal to him in courage and military knowledge, far his superior in numbers, and whose soldiers were in their full vigour? Yet to wait for them at *Mexico*, was to expose himself at once to the danger of being attacked, at the same time, by two enemies equally formidable; it being more than probable that as soon as the Mexicans discovered the Spaniards were in danger, they would take up arms against them—or, to conclude, should he voluntarily surrender himself, and submit to the judgment of a man who thirsted for his blood? in this case his ruin was inevitable. While he was in this state of uncertainty, he every day received intelligence that increased his embarrassment: he learnt that some of his soldiers had deserted to the army of Narvaez, and had informed that commander of all that was necessary to forward the success of his enterprise; he also understood

understood that Narvaez had caused it to be published that Cortez and his whole army were traitors, who, without the knowledge or order of their sovereign, had set out upon the expedition of subduing the Mexicans; that the newly-arrived army was sent to chastise the injustice of this fugitive banditti, to load them with chains, and afterwards to carry them to their own country to receive the punishment due to their enormous crimes; that in consequence he, Narvaez, not only invited Montezuma, who had been so ill-treated, but the whole nation to make it a common cause, and to assist him in rendering himself master of this audacious band of robbers.

It is easy to judge how agreeable this news must be to Montezuma and his subjects, whose resentment was already raised to a very high pitch. Their joy and haste to lend an assisting hand to Narvaez were but too visible; one thing only embarrassed and prevented their showing, by open hostilities, their ardent inclination to free themselves from these odious strangers: this was the air of confidence and composure which Cortez pre-

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served

served through the whole. The strong mind of this extraordinary man maintained such an empire over his exterior, that it was impossible to observe the least sign of inquietude or chagrin, either in his countenance or manner, how great soever the uneasiness which his dangerous situation necessarily caused him. With the calmest and most confirmed air he contradicted the reports which Narvaez had circulated to his disadvantage, and averred that the Europeans just arrived were his friends, subjects of the same sovereign, and that in a short time the Mexicans would see the two armies depart in peace and friendship. But, however confident and composed Cortez outwardly appeared, his mind was not the less agitated and uneasy; he employed all the sagacity of which he was master to investigate the measures it was prudent for him to take; and after having well weighed every circumstance, he resolved to pursue the path equally pointed out by his discernment and courage. This was, first to attempt an amicable accommodation with Narvaez, and, if this did not succeed, courageously to oppose him.

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These overtures were accordingly made, but proved ineffectual; the haughty Narvaez would listen to no accommodation, regarding it as extremely easy to render himself master of Cortez and his small army. No other alternative was therefore left our hero than to defend himself as well as he was able; and for this he immediately prepared. He nominated Alvarado, a brave officer, particularly respected by the Mexicans, Governor of *Mexico* and of a hundred and fifty men, whom he resolved to leave there, expressly commanding him to maintain peace and tranquillity during his absence, and to behave with all possible respect toward Montezuma, who, of his own accord, had promised to remain under the guard of the Spaniards till Cortez should return. And now, my children, behold this daring adventurer ready to march with the small remnant of his divided army to meet an enemy infinitely his superior in numbers, and at the same time animated with implacable hatred towards his person.—But it grows late, we will defer his departure till to-morrow morning.

DIALOGUE X.

THE Father. Come, children, let us attend Cortez on an expedition which has the appearance of being the last tragic scene of his life.

Charlotte. Oh, poor Cortez !

The Father. Narvaez had advanced to *Cempoalla*, and Sandoval had confided the colony of *Vera Cruz* to the care of the Indians, his allies, with the view of endeavouring to reunite his little band with that of Cortez, who advanced with the rapidity of an arrow to meet him. They joined within twelve miles of *Cempoalla* ; but notwithstanding this junction, the whole army consisted only of two hundred and fifty men ; a wretched force indeed ! when compared with that of his adversary ; but the intrepidity of Cortez remained unshaken, and he steadily persevered in his determination of marching resolutely toward the enemy. In order to acquit himself

self to his own conscience, and, if possible, to avoid bloodshed, Cortez twice renewed his overtures to Narvaez for an amicable accommodation; but his propositions were each time rejected with haughtiness and contempt. He even learnt that this irreconcilable enemy had set a price upon his head, in the hope of inducing some traitor in his army to make an attempt on his life; but Cortez was too well assured of the affection and fidelity of his soldiers to be alarmed at the inglorious conduct of his adversary. On the contrary, he advanced courageously towards *Cempoalla*, and was not more than a mile from it when Narvaez, incensed at this boldness in an enemy whom he despised, resolved without delay to give him battle, and accordingly marched forward to the encounter: but so great a quantity of rain had fallen that day, and Cortez was placed so advantageously on the opposite side of a river, that Narvaez found it impossible to attack him on account of the great overflowing of the water. His troops, who were not yet accustomed to the country, and who, had their inclinations been consulted, would rather have

served under Cortez than their present commander, murmured so loudly, that he was constrained toward evening to return to *Cempoalla*.

Cortez, according to his usual manner of resolving, and executing what he had resolved with dispatch, formed the sudden but well-digested resolution of putting an end to the war that very night, either by his own or the destruction of his adversary. He determined to fall unawares upon the enemy during the obscurity of a rainy night, hoping from the confident negligence of Narvaez, and the indolence of his soldiers, who were not yet inured to war, that in such a night they would be less on their guard.

He therefore assembled his little band, discovered to them the attack he meditated, and to his great satisfaction found that no persuasion was wanting to excite them to the perilous attempt, each testifying his ardour to be led on to the encounter. Cortez divided his army into three separate corps; one of which he gave to the command of Sandoval, another to Olid, and placed himself at the head of the third.

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The night proved dark and stormy; the river, which was now swelled above its banks, equalled the roaring of an impetuous torrent, and there was no other means of gaining the opposite side than by fording it. The danger of being drowned was great, but too inconsiderable to stop the progress of men of such determined courage. Cortez first leaped into the water, and his men with joy and confidence followed the example of so brave a commander. They waded up to the neck in water, but happily all arrived safe on the other side.

Wet as they were, they arranged themselves in order of battle, and marched towards *Cempoalla* in profound silence, each armed with a sword, a poniard, and a long Indian pike. This last weapon was to be used against the cavalry of the enemy, the wary General conceiving it as particularly calculated for that purpose.

What Cortez had foreseen happened; Narvaez had been so negligently incautious as to leave only at the out-posts two sentinels; one of these was surprised and made prisoner, and the other, impelled by terror, fled to the city,

city, and gave the alarm: but, astonishing to relate! Narvaez, from a weak confidence in his own strength, and a contempt still more absurd for his enemy, carried his folly so far, as to interpret the information of the sentinel as the effect of cowardice and a deranged understanding, considering it ridiculous in the highest degree to imagine that Cortez, with his handful of men, would presume to attack him. In the mean while the horrible sound of war was heard, and Cortez, with his brave companions, rushed like a storm into the city, which they filled with consternation and terror. Narvaez too late discovered his error, and endeavoured to repair it by arming with all diligence. He had posted himself and his army in a spacious temple, and its environs; but the enemy fell upon it so suddenly, and with such fury, that they were unable to repulse him by a single cannon. Sandoval, who commanded the advanced guard, fell upon the artillery with irresistible force, and pursued the enemy, who fought in disorder, to the very top of the temple steps. Here a furious and obstinate combat began; Narvaez, who was in the temple

temple, animated his soldiers both by his voice and example, and Sandoval still continued to force them to retreat. Olid seconded him; and Cortez himself, at that moment forgetting that he was General, leaped boldly to the front of the battle, and animated his men with fresh ardour. In the midst of this furious engagement it occurred to one of Cortez's soldiers to throw fire on the roof of the temple, which was covered with reeds. In a few minutes it was in a blaze; and Narvaez, constrained to avoid the flames, fought obstinately at the head of his men to open himself a passage through the enemy; but at that instant he received so terrible a wound in the eye with the point of a lance, that he fell insensible to the earth. Sandoval dragged him apparently dead to the foot of the steps, and ordered him to be placed in security beyond the tumult of the battle. During this time the conquerors burst into triumphant exclamations of joy; and the party whose general was made prisoner was thrown into such consternation, that their resistance became more and more feeble, and

and their entire defeat every instant more certain.

Cortez ordered the cannon to be pointed against the temple, and proclaimed aloud that their lives should answer a longer resistance; but that, on the contrary, those who would voluntarily surrender should obtain pardon. This declaration, and a circumstance which happened very à-propos for Cortez, induced this corps, though three times more numerous than his own, to throw down their arms and surrender.

Nicholas. What could possess them to act in so dastardly a manner?

The Father. The troops of Narvaez perceived, through the obscurity of the night, an innumerable quantity of small lights resembling lighted matches; which led them to imagine that Cortez was supported by a large body of arquebusiers, who were advancing to his assistance; for in those days guns were not fired in the manner they are now, by means of a flint, but by lighted matches.

Frederic. But what were the lights that deceived them?

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The Father. Did you ever hear of fire-flies?

Frederic. Oh, yes; little insects, which in the dark appear like fire*.

The Father. Well, it was these insects that were mistaken for lighted matches.

Charles. But as the soldiers had been some time in America, I should think they must have had frequent opportunities of observing these fire-flies.

The Father. Your observation is certainly just; but they were probably too inattentive

* The Fire-fly, or *Fulgora Candelaria*, are very numerous in the West Indies and other hot climates. Pere du Tertre affirms, that in dark nights they sparkle like stars, but in the day have only the appearance of dirty beetles, and delight to be among rotten wood till the sun is set, when they fly here and there, seeming to be so many lighted candles carried in the woods by invisible hands. They will pursue the light of a candle, or any thing that sparkles and shines, with so much ardour, that like our moths they frequently kill themselves. While they are alive and in full health a flame appears to proceed from all parts of their body; but when they are sick it grows weak, and when they die it is quite extinguished. They live but fifteen days, or three weeks at most, after being caught.

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and negligent to have remarked them. This incident, my children, should prove to you the utility of that important precept, that how trifling soever a thing may at first sight appear, we should never suffer it to pass without examination; but on the contrary, if time and opportunity permit, consider it with attention, and consult the opinion of men of understanding and information. This is the certain means of daily improving our rational faculties, and acquiring useful knowledge. Do not forget that the negligence of this precept was the chief cause of a considerable band of well armed warriors shamefully yielding themselves prisoners to a handful of daring adventurers. Cortez caused his prisoners to be treated with the greatest humanity. He even made them presents, and left it entirely to their choice to serve under him or to return to *Cuba*. Affected with this generosity, which could never have been more judiciously employed, they almost unanimously preferred the first; and Cortez had the good fortune to behold himself delivered from the greatest danger with which he had ever been threat-

threatened, and at the same time to see his little army augmented to the number of eight hundred fresh and well armed soldiers; an increase which appeared to raise his power, before considerable for this part of the world, to the highest pitch.

Narvaez, when he recovered his senses, was overwhelmed with shame and grief on perceiving himself in fetters, and in the power of an enemy he had treated with such contempt. Cortez was desirous of seeing him; yet fearing his presence might be construed into an insulting triumph, he wished to remain unknown; but this intention was frustrated by the respect his soldiers paid him on entering the apartment of his prisoner. The haughty Narvaez on this discovery turned disdainfully, saying, "Truely, Captain, you have reason to exult, since you have been successful enough to take me prisoner." This ill-timed arrogance deserved a check, and Cortez replied, "Whatever God decrees is right; but I can with great truth assure you, that I consider the capture of yourself, Narvaez, among the meanest of my actions, and most inconsiderable of my victories." He then
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caused him to be doubly ironed, and conducted to *Vera Cruz* for farther safety.

Cortez had but a few hours exulted in so prompt and glorious a victory, when he was summoned to encounter new perils, which in the interval had burst forth like a distant storm. An express from *Mexico* arrived with the disagreeable news, that the inhabitants of that city had universally revolted against the Spaniards who were left there, and that it was with difficulty Alvarado sustained himself in the fortress against them. Nay, Montezuma himself had sent one of his people to entreat Cortez to hasten his return in order to suppress the insurrection. With respect to the true cause of this tumult I am not able to inform you with certainty, as I find the different accounts of historians too trifling and contradictory to be relied on. The most probable conclusion is, that it proceeded from the insolent and violent conduct of the Spaniards that were left at *Mexico*. Whatever might be the cause, the danger was so great and pressing, that Cortez had not a moment to lose in affording succour to his harassed countrymen, and he had every reason to esteem

esteem himself fortunate in having so happily defeated Narvaez before he was recalled to *Mexico* by this unfortunate event.

At the head of his now formidable army he marched with the greatest expedition toward the capital by the way of *Tlascala*, where the faithful Tlascalans offered him a reinforcement of all their troops. He accepted only two thousand men, expressing his gratitude in the warmest terms for the continuation of their friendship. He had indeed the greater reason to prize their fidelity, as he had observed a material alteration in the sentiments of the inhabitants of the other districts through which he was obliged to pass. He was received every where with coldness and reserve, and found a great abatement in that eagerness with which the natives formerly pressed forward to supply his army with provisions. From this he judged that the inhabitants of *Mexico* were not the only malcontents, but that a hatred of the Spaniards and a spirit of revolt were equally diffused throughout the nation. This put him much more on his guard in his march to *Mexico*; but the good fortune of the Spaniards and the

the supineness of the Mexicans rendered his precaution useless: for, though nothing could have been more easy than to cut off his return to *Mexico*, and have prevented the sortie of the Spaniards he had left in the garrison, by simply destroying the bridges of the dykes, the inhabitants of that city were too senseless to avail themselves of these advantages. Cortez found the bridges as he had left them, safe and unguarded—so that nothing opposed his entering with his army. But how different was this entry from that he had made when he was first received into the capital! There was now scarcely any person to receive him; no one advanced to admire; no one uttered a joyful exclamation; a melancholy silence reigned through all the streets, which were entirely deserted; and not one even of Alvarado's associates appeared till the army arrived at the Spanish quarter. Here it was that the two parties met, with the most heartfelt satisfaction. Alvarado and his soldiers were transported to behold themselves, as it were, delivered from the most imminent danger, and Cortez and his men were equally so with the joy of their victory.

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and again returning to their companions: even Montezuma himself, who had continued true to his promise of not leaving the Spanish quarter, appeared sincerely to participate in the general satisfaction. Cortez then inquired into all that had passed in his absence, and understood that the Mexicans, excited by the imprudent and oppressive conduct of the Spaniards, had taken up arms. Neither their own personal danger nor that of their captive prince had prevented their courageously and repeatedly assaulting the Spanish quarter, where Alvarado with his little band had with the utmost difficulty repulsed their attacks. They had burnt the two brigantines, killed four of the Spaniards, and wounded a greater number. The total ruin of the remainder must unavoidably have followed, had it not been prevented by the speedy return of their victorious General. Cortez, with the considerable forces he had brought, and the respect the Mexicans preserved for his person, might undoubtedly with little difficulty have composed their irritated spirits, and appeased the sedition, if he had not on a sudden absurdly changed the

conduct he had usually pursued. Intoxicated with the extraordinary success which had hitherto attended him, he appeared to regard every new peril with the utmost contempt, considering it no longer of importance to conceal his real designs. From this period, it is said, he treated Montezuma himself with the most unpardonable disrespect; and his former prudence appeared so far to have forsaken him, that to the just indignation of an incensed people he opposed only haughtiness and contempt. Cortez, in this instance, my children, affords us a striking example of the errors into which even the best men may fall when corrupted by a continuance of success. Then it is that they bid adieu to generosity, that their reason is clouded, and that they give themselves up to excesses of which they before seemed incapable. So true it is, that man in his present state is not formed for the enjoyment of a perfect and continued felicity, and that an entire gratification of his wishes would ultimately prove his destruction. Too much prosperity has the same effect on the soul that excess of strong liquors has upon the body, enervating and corrupting at once

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the health and the judgment; while, on the contrary, adversity and sorrow are to the mind empoisoned with self-importance, as salutary and strengthening as Jesuit's bark to the body weakened and exhausted by disease. Observe this, my dear children, that you may during life be on your guard when any extraordinary success happens to you, and avoid murmuring should the hand of a wise and merciful Providence sometimes present to you the chalice of affliction: Drink the bitter draught without repining, remembering that it will strengthen you in virtue.—But enough for to-day.

DIALOGUE XI.

MY dear children, said their father when his young auditors were again assembled, I could wish here to finish my narrative, or that another should take my place and recount to you the sequel.

Some of the Children exclaim, Why so?

The Father. Because the events in which my hero is concerned become every instant more dark and horrible; and it gives me pain to have nothing from this period to describe to you but war, murders, and devastation.

Peter. But still, dear father, this horrid picture will have its use?

The Father. How so? Where will be the end of shocking your ears with such a recital?

Peter. It will prove an example, dear father, to deter us from acting in the same manner when we grow up.

The Father. There is certainly some justice in what you urge; and since you are willing to profit by the sequel of my history, sanguinary and horrid as it is, and think it will incite you to the practice of the mild and amiable virtues of tolerance, and especially of humanity, I will proceed.

The Children. O, dear father!

The Father. Cortez flattered himself that by employing force he should easily curb the spirit of the revolted Mexicans: he therefore

fore sent Ordaz, one of his bravest officers, with a body of four hundred men, part Spaniards and part Tlascalans, to see if the people were at this time quiet, or if they were preparing for fresh attacks. Ordaz at the head of his men entered upon his commission; but he had not proceeded far through the streets before he was met by an armed band of Mexicans. His design being to take some of them prisoners, in order to draw from them the intelligence he wanted, he immediately advanced toward them; but they, instead of staying to defend themselves, kept retreating, not from cowardice, as it afterwards appeared, but by order of their commander, who was endeavouring to draw the Spanish Captain and his whole band into an ambuscade. This plan succeeded; Ordaz pursued the fugitives to a part of the city, where, on a sudden, he found himself surrounded and assaulted on all sides by innumerable enemies. Even the roofs of the houses were covered with adversaries, who sent from thence so violent a shower of stones, arrows, and javelins, that the air was darkened. Fortunately in this moment of

unexpected danger Ordaz lost neither his courage nor presence of mind, but was capable of arranging his little band, pressed as it was on all sides, in the position which his present circumstances rendered most judicious; he immediately formed what is called a *square battalion*. You know what that is?

Some of the Children. To be sure we do; we have often formed it ourselves when we have been exercising.

The Father. On the sides of this square he placed those who bore lances, and in the centre arranged others who were armed with muskets. The first were to receive the enemy with their pikes, and the last to fire on the assailants, who were on the roofs of the houses, and at the windows: in this position he lost not an instant, but rushed among the thickest of the enemy. It was not long before the Mexicans gave way; Ordaz cut his passage through them, and after a great carnage at length regained the Spanish quarter. One Spaniard and eight Tlascalans were killed in this engagement, and Ordaz himself and the greater part of his men were wounded. After this signal defeat

feat it was hoped that the Mexicans would not have courage to renew hostilities; but scarcely had the victorious band regained the fort, when the enemy was perceived pouring like a torrent from afar in innumerable bands to make a general attack.

Cortez immediately prepared for his defence, and an engagement ensued which for obstinacy and carnage has not perhaps its equal in the annals of history. The Mexicans, apparently resolved to conquer or die, rushed forward with such horrid cries, accompanied by the noise of their horns and drums, that the thunder of the cannon could scarcely be distinguished. Some kept up a continual shower of arrows and stones, while others with a visible contempt of death endeavoured to scale the walls or render themselves masters of the gates. They mounted upon the shoulders of each other to gain the top of the wall; and as they were thrown from thence dead or wounded, their places were immediately supplied by others, whose fury was such that they pressed forward over heaps of the slain and wounded to supply the voids. Notwithstanding the havoc made by the musketry,

and artillery, they continued the assault, till at length, after a horrid carnage, their superstition constrained them to put an end to the contest; for night approached, and after sunset their religion obliges them to leave the field. The Spaniards were not however the more tranquil during the night; for although the Mexicans, according to their superstitious notions, dared not continue the combat, they found means to set fire to the buildings in which the Spaniards were lodged, and it cost the latter incredible pains to prevent the conflagration reducing the whole to ashes. The Spaniards, fatigued with the combat of the evening and with the toils of the night, were nevertheless obliged at day-break to resume their posts, in order to be ready to sustain a new attack. But spare me, my children, the pain of reciting, and yourselves of listening to, the detail of a scene whose horrors were at least equal to the former. It is enough to inform you, that the rage of this irritated nation was unappeased, although their every attempt to carry the Spanish fort proved fruitless, and Cortez in several forties that he courageously made had extended thousands

sands on the earth, and reduced a part of their city to ashes. I shall now without farther delay proceed to an event which will excite all your compassion, and which I cannot myself unmoved recount to you.

Cortez had experienced the fate of the greater part of his soldiers, that is to say, he had been wounded. His left hand had been pierced with an arrow, and he profited by this accident to withdraw to his chamber, in order to gain a few minutes to reflect on his critical situation, and on the manner of extricating himself; but the sound of a new alarm in several parts of the fortress interrupted his reflection, the Mexicans running in crowds to make a second assault. He returned therefore to the battle, and soon perceived that his presence was never more necessary, for the enemy now strove to force an entry at every practicable place, and fought with greater obstinacy than on the preceding days; so that Cortez had need of all his presence of mind and activity to issue orders necessary for the general defence. In the mean time, during the heat of the action the unfortunate Montezuma formed the resolution, some say

of his own accord, and others at the instigation of the Spaniards, of attempting to put a stop to the slaughter, by appearing before his enraged subjects arrayed in all the pomp under which he had formerly been venerated even to adoration. Accordingly he put on his imperial mantle and crown, and decorated himself with precious stones, which he never made use of but on solemn occasions, and thus attired went out accompanied by the principal Mexicans, who were about his person. One of these mounted the wall, and announced to the astonished people the arrival of their sovereign, who was ready to hear their complaints, and reconcile their differences with the strangers. At the name of Montezuma the combatants ceased, and kept a respectful silence. The unfortunate monarch then himself ascended the wall, and his presence produced on the multitude the hoped-for effect: all appeared impressed with the deepest awe and reverence; some falling on their knees, others prostrating themselves and kissing the earth. Montezuma took a general view of the crowd, in order to discover those on whom he had the greatest influence; and

and to these he called by name. He then with the greatest affability thanked the multitude for the affection they had shown to his person, and for their zeal for his liberty; but assured them, if they thought him a prisoner they were in an error—that his residence in the Spanish quarter was far from constrained—that he was himself desirous of remaining with the Spaniards, as well to inform himself of their customs and manners, as to manifest his esteem for the powerful monarch by whom they were sent—that he was however now resolved to leave them, and in consequence commanded his people, first granting them a general pardon, to lay down their arms and return to their homes in peace and tranquillity. A silence of some minutes succeeded this discourse: at length a confused murmur arose which by degrees became more distinct, until like the roaring of an encroaching wave it pervaded the whole assembly, every instant increased, and at length terminated in seditious outrage; for now these audacious mutineers, no longer withheld by the respect and veneration they once bore to the sacred

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person of their prince, burst into open complaints, and carried their insolence so far as to exclaim, that he was no longer Emperor of Mexico, but a base wretch, a slave to the enemy of their country! Montezuma once more endeavoured to renew his discourse, and with this intent made a sign with his hand; but all was in vain! the noise increased, and before he could speak a shower of arrows and stones overwhelmed the unfortunate monarch. The two soldiers whom Cortez had placed near him endeavoured to cover him with their bucklers; but, alas, it was too late. The measure of his suffering was complete; he was wounded by several arrows, and a stone which unfortunately struck him on the head felled him insensibly to the earth. Cortez, in the greatest consternation at this melancholy event, immediately caused the unfortunate prince to be carried from the spot, and if possible recalled to life. Then animated by rage and disappointment, he returned to take a signal vengeance on his murderers; but he arrived too late, for the Mexicans no sooner saw their monarch fall, than, struck with astonishment

nishment, terror, and repentance, they immediately dispersed, as if expecting the thunder of heaven to fall and punish their crime.

In the interval the unfortunate Montezuma returned to his senses; but his situation was then the more pitiable. The thought of the treatment he had received from his own subjects rendered him frantic, so that it was necessary by force to prevent his making an attempt upon his life. In vain Cortez endeavoured to sooth him; he refused all consolation, and in his rage tore the bandages from his wounds to terminate his existence. These violent agitations, and an obstinate refusal of all sustenance, hastened his end: he died amidst the curses of his subjects, and to his last moment testified the utmost contempt for the exhortations of the Spaniards to embrace the Christian religion. Such was the tragical end of a prince, who appeared destined to afford an example of the inconstancy of fortune. From that high pitch of greatness, in which he was venerated almost to idolatry by a numerous people, he beheld himself, by the arrival of a small band of foreigners whose very existence was unknown, fallen
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so low as to become the sport and tool of these invaders, and an object of contempt and hatred to his own subjects. Could any one a year before have believed the possibility of such a degradation? This, my children, is one of the instances which should teach us not to rely on an uninterrupted course of good fortune in this world, and at the same time it should excite us to acquire treasures which can never be taken from us. Do you understand what I mean by these treasures?

John. Wisdom and virtue, my dear father.

The Father. You are right: the sacrifice of a whole life is not too great to obtain these mental riches, of which death itself cannot deprive us.—But now let us return to *Mexico*.

While Montezuma remained confined by his wounds, his subjects were perfectly quiet; but scarcely were his eyes closed, when they proceeded to the election of another sovereign, to re-commence hostilities against the Spaniards.

Ferdinand. Whom did they choose for their new Emperor?

The Father. A brother of Montezuma, named

named Queltavaka, then Cacique of *Estapalapa*, a city of which you are not ignorant.

Christian. Oh ! I remember ; it is near the lake : Cortez passed it in his way to *Mexico*.

The Father. The same. This new Emperor commenced hostilities against the Spaniards by an enterprise which not a little endangered them. He posted the choicest of his troops on the roof and in the tower of the principal temple, which joined the Spanish quarter, and conveyed thither a great quantity of stones and beams, which were to be launched from thence into the interior court of the Spanish quarter. Cortez, who now thought seriously of a retreat, was by this prevented making the necessary preparations for his departure ; he therefore considered it of the last importance to dislodge the enemy from a post in which they had so much the power of annoying him. The conduct of this enterprise he gave to Escobar, one of his bravest officers, whom he placed at the head of a select band : he himself, in the mean time, with the remainder of his troops, was to oppose the progress of the enemy in the streets, that those who were deputed

puted to scale the temple might not be attacked in their rear. The plan of attack being laid, they immediately prepared to put it in execution. Escobar being arrived at the foot of the steps of the temple, which are said to have amounted to the number of a hundred, found little resistance; but when he began to ascend, and reached nearly half way to the top, a large body of the enemy suddenly appeared above in the gallery, and overwhelmed him with so great a quantity of arrows, stones, and beams, that it was in vain to resist them. Three times he had attempted an apparent impossibility, and three times had been repulsed by an irresistible force; when Cortez, informed of his situation, without hesitating leaped from his horse, caused his buckler to be fastened on his right arm, his left being wounded, and ran sword in hand to the steps of the temple. Here he called aloud to his soldiers, who, re-animated by his voice, and accustomed to victory, followed their leader, who pressed forward to a death which appeared inevitable; but it pleased heaven to preserve the life of this extraordinary man. At

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the head of the most resolute of his men, he rushed into the gallery, beat down all that opposed him, and soon gained the platform of the temple, where the most distinguished among the Mexicans had assembled with the firm resolution of meeting death or victory. Here began a most bloody combat with swords and clubs, in which each endeavoured to sell his life as dearly as possible. Not a single Mexican was there, who did not prefer being hewn in pieces to surrendering to the enemy. Some leaped voluntarily from the pinnacle of the temple, that they might not survive their liberty, and all fought with a courage of which there had been hitherto no example in the New World. Two young Americans, of noble birth, distinguished themselves in this engagement by an action which deserves a place among the most heroic exploits. These young heroes had formed the generous resolution of voluntarily sacrificing themselves for the deliverance of their oppressed country: they approached Cortez as he was fighting in an attitude of supplication, as if they meant to surrender, but were no sooner within reach than they seized and dragged him toward

ward the pinnacle of the temple, from whence they leaped, hoping by their weight to drag him with them, and make him a partaker in their destruction; but Cortez, who was strong and agile, caught hold of the gallery, and sustained himself so firmly that the young Mexicans fell alone. This heroic action, it is said, impressed Cortez with the highest admiration, as proceeding from a greatness of soul not to be expected among a people half savage, and under a despotic government. The slaughter did not cease till the whole garrison was bathed in blood. It is asserted that the number of the killed amounted to five hundred, all people of the most distinguished class, whose patriotism and courage must ever be honoured by posterity, although their names have not been handed down to us by any historian. Cortez was no sooner master of the temple, than his active and courageous spirit prompted him to rush into the streets where his men were yet engaged with the enemy: regardless of his personal safety he remounted his horse, and, tying the bridle to his left arm, rushed lance in hand among the thickest of the enemy. Unfortunately

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his courage carried him so far, that turning his horse to look round him he perceived between him and his own men so great a multitude of enemies, that he himself held it impossible to cut his way through them. From this dangerous situation his promptitude in expedients and his unshaken courage once more extricated him; for, perceiving on one side a path where the enemy were less numerous, he darted courageously into it, in order to join his men by an indirect road—but had soon reason to feel that Providence itself inspired him with the resolution; for he had not proceeded far before he met a body of the enemy conducting André Duero his intimate friend, who had had the misfortune to fall from his horse, to a temple, where they were going immediately to sacrifice him to their idols. Cortez hesitated not an instant to consider the strength of the enemy, but rushed into the midst of them, and put those to flight who held his friend captive. Duero was no sooner free, than, with a poniard his enemies had injudiciously left him, he fell upon those who had seized his horse, which he suddenly mounted; and the two friends fought with such

such determined resolution, that they soon had the good fortune to join the Spanish corps. It is easy to conceive the joy of Cortez in having thus happily delivered his friend in such a moment of danger; we are told that he ever after spoke of this event as the happiest of his life. In the mean time, as the enemy gave way on all sides, Cortez founded a retreat in order to spare the effusion of more blood, and that his troops might repose from the toils of so fatiguing a day. They withdrew therefore into the fort.

DIALOGUE XII.

THE two armies remained all the succeeding day in inaction. Cortez was occupied in making preparations for his departure, and the Mexicans appeared suddenly to desist from all hostilities; but this pacific spirit was merely assumed, nothing being farther from their intention.

intentions than peace. On the contrary, they were more resolutely determined than ever wholly to extirpate the Spaniards; and this apparent calm was only the effect of a new plan by which they were contriving to accomplish their purpose. They now applied themselves wholly to cut off the retreat of their enemy by breaking down the bridges and exterminating them by famine. This project was replete with danger to the Spaniards; but Cortez, who was prepared for all events, took measures to counteract their designs. He caused a portable bridge to be constructed with the greatest expedition, which in his projected retreat could be fixed in the apertures occasioned by the destruction of the bridges, and, as soon as it was finished, ordered every one to be ready for his march on the following night. He hoped the darkness that prevailed would enable him to escape unperceived, or that the superstitution of the enemy would prevent their molesting him in his retreat; but how greatly was he deceived!

When night arrived he divided his army into three columns. The command of the first, which

which formed the advanced guard, he gave to Sandoval; he himself chose the middle, as being the centre of the army; and at the head of the third, or rear guard, he placed Valasquez De Leon, a near relation to the Governor of *Cuba*. Before they began their march he endeavoured to convince his men of the necessity of foregoing the treasures they had amassed, that they might be lighter and better prepared for combat. Some were inclined to follow his advice; but others murmured so loudly that he was at length obliged to lessen the rigour of his demand, by adding, that he desired them at least to confine themselves to what they were certain would not impede their activity. The wise conformed to this rule; but the avaricious despised it, and loaded themselves with a burden which soon dragged them on to ruin.

It was midnight, an hour in which all nature is sunk in repose, when the army began its march. The Spaniards carefully avoided making the least noise, and the rain which then fell appeared to favour their escape. They proceeded without discovering the least opposition till they arrived at the dyke which
led

led to *Tacuba*, and which Cortez for two reasons had preferred to the others. In the first place, it was the narrowest; and in the next, he had hopes that the Mexicans in breaking down the bridges might have forgotten this, as it conducted to a side directly opposite to the road by which the Spaniards arrived, as you may see by your map. This hope was found to be vain; for, as soon as they advanced on the causeway, and reached the place where the first bridge was, they found that it had really been destroyed, and rejoiced in the foresight of their wary commander; for, by the assistance of the portable bridge which they threw over the dyke, the greater part of the army arrived happily on the other side, and marched on to another chasm. Before they could attain it, the sudden and horrid cry of war announced death and ruin on all sides; the lake was in an instant covered with boats, and a terrible shower of arrows and stones began one of the most dreadful combats history has recorded, as much on account of the place, as of the thick darkness and exertions of the combatants.

The Mexicans, without suffering their design

sign to transpire, in the deepest silence had narrowly watched every motion of their enemy, and had made their preparations with so much secrecy and prudence, that the Spaniards had no intimation till this dreadful moment, when they found themselves on a sudden assailed by the whole force of a nation irritated almost to madness. They were, as I have before observed, in the midst of a narrow causeway, between the first and second apertures, caused by the pulling down of the bridges. The portable bridge which had transported them over the first chasm was to be withdrawn and carried to the second; but the weight of the artillery had jammed it so forcibly between the stones, that no strength was able to remove it. While the Spaniards were making fruitless efforts to this purpose they found themselves surrounded and attacked on all sides with such fury that no hope was left either of vanquishing or escaping. The Mexicans, burning with vengeance seemed universally animated with the desire of sacrificing their lives or of exterminating the enemy of their country. In vain the Spaniards exerted their usual courage, so

often

often exercised, to cut themselves a passage through the enemy. As soon as they had hewn down one combatant another supplied his place, and they now found themselves oppressed by so great a multitude, that neither their military knowledge nor their fire-arms were of the least advantage. Their strength was at length exhausted, and they were no longer able to resist the numbers which continued to pour upon them like a torrent. The first ranks gave way, and a general disorder ensued; foot and horse, friends and enemies, were driven tumultuously on one another, each hewing down all around him, unable in the thick darkness to discover who were friends and who were enemies. In the midst of this horrid butchery Cortez assembled about a hundred men, at the head of which he endeavoured to cut his way to the second and third aperture of the dyke. This attempt succeeded; and throwing the bodies of the slain into the chasm, they marched over them, and at length happily attained the opposite bank: but the generous heart of Cortez disdained his own preservation while he saw the greater part of his people in danger; he

VOL. II.

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therefore

therefore arranged the few men who had escaped with him, and, choosing the small number from among them that were not wounded, returned with all dispatch to partake new perils with those of his comrades, who were yet engaged with the enemy. A small party, who had also cut their way through the enemy, rushed forward to meet him; but the joy which he experienced on this occasion was soon poisoned by the mournful cries of those who had fallen alive into the hands of the Mexicans, and were dragging to the temple to be sacrificed to the idols. With a bleeding heart he made the last effort to save them, but, alas, it was fruitless: he found it impossible to pierce through the enemy, and was forced to content himself with collecting the small number who were preserved, and who were for the most part so fatigued and wounded, that it was impossible to renew the combat. The greater part of his army was destroyed, some having been killed by the enemy, and others having perished in the waters. When morning appeared to disclose the horrid massacre of the night, humanity drew tears from his eyes on beholding how
many

many of his brave comrades were wanting, and how pitiable was the condition of the survivors. Above half of the Spaniards, and more than two thousand Tlascalans, had perished; even Valasquez De Leon and some of his bravest officers were missing, and almost all that remained were covered with wounds. The artillery, ammunition, baggage, and the greater part of the treasures were lost: the last-named occasioned the ruin of those who had imprudently laden themselves, the weight of the burden imposed by their avarice impeding them both in the combat and in their flight. This signal defeat is particularly denominated by the name of *The Night of Desolation*, which is given in *New Spain* to the anniversary on which it happened.

They first halted at *Tamba*; but it was not thought prudent to continue there, the whole country being in arms. The only spot that seemed to present them with a secure asylum was *Tlascala*; but to gain the road which led to it, it was necessary from the west, where they then were, to keep along all the northern coast of the great lake of *Mexico*, and for several days to traverse countries unknown,

where they had no expectation of being supplied with refreshments, of which they stood much in need after the fatigues and anguish they had undergone; yet as there was no other alternative they immediately set forward: but who can recount the different miseries and new perils to which these poor fugitives were every instant exposed in their retreat! Weakened by the fatigues of combat, exhausted with hunger, labouring under the most painful wounds, and surrounded by a triumphant enemy, who harassed them without ceasing, they were constrained to take their route through pathless deserts, which afforded for their nourishment only wild seeds, roots, and the green stems of Indian corn. Sometimes they feared they should sink under these calamities; but the example of their brave leader ever re-animated their courage and fortitude. With a serenity truly admirable this extraordinary man shared these accumulated evils with the lowest of his soldiers; the first to face every danger, he was the last to participate in any little comfort which accidentally occurred; and, above all, continued inexhaustible in resources, and still possessed

possessed of that uncommon presence of mind which had ever befriended him in the most critical emergencies. Oh, why was not such greatness of soul united with the mild and amiable virtues of humanity! Their toilsome march had continued five days, and they were not yet at the end of their fatigues. Marian, who, as well as Aquila, was among those who had escaped, had often in the attacks, which the Mexicans constantly renewed, heard them address this exclamation to the Spaniards: "March on, robbers! March where the recompense of your crimes awaits you." The meaning of these words was not at the time understood; but on the sixth day, as they drew near *Otumba*, it was fully revealed, to the great terror of them all; for, having attained an eminence at a little distance the Spaniards perceived with astonishment the whole plain covered with innumerable warriors; a sight at which the most courageous (Cortez excepted) lost all hope of their preservation. He, still preserving his natural fortitude, represented to his soldiers, with an air itself capable of inspiring courage, that the time was come when they must either

conquer or die. He then arranged his little corps with his usual coolness, and immediately led them on to the enemy. As the ripe grain falls before the sickle of the reaper, so fell the thick ranks of the enemy beneath the sword of our heroes. Nothing could resist them; with a desperate valour they penetrated even to the centre of the hostile army, strewing their path with death and slaughter, until at length exhausted with fatigue, their sinews relaxed, and the enemy at the same time falling upon them on all sides, it is certain that none would have escaped destruction, had not a happy thought suddenly occurred to their vigilant leader. He perceived from afar the chief of the Mexican army bearing aloft the standard of the empire, and fortunately recollected having heard that the Mexicans commonly looked upon all as lost from the instant this standard was taken. His plan was instantly formed; at the head of his bravest cavalry he rushed into the midst of the troops that composed the guard of the colours, and with a stroke of his lance extended the Mexican General on the earth, while two of his suite immediately leaped from their
horses,

horses, dispatched him, and seized the standard. At the same instant all the other colours were lowered; confusion and terror were spread throughout the Mexican army; and, with astonishment, the Spaniards beheld them throw down their arms, and take to flight.

Thus, my children, did a happy turn of thought preserve the Spaniards, and gain them a victory as glorious as it was advantageous; for, having collected the booty which they took on the field of battle, it proved so considerable, that it almost indemnified them for the loss of the treasures they had left at Mexico; the greater part of the Mexicans, from their positive assurance of victory, having arrayed themselves in their most magnificent ornaments.

The next day they arrived in the territories of their Tlascalan allies, not without fears of experiencing a change in their sentiments respecting them; but these apprehensions were wholly groundless. This noble and generous people were incapable of failing in their faith to their allies because they were unfortunate; they received them, on the

contrary, with as much friendship as if in the height of their power and success. A striking example of steady and disinterested friendship, that should in some sort compensate for the many horrid scenes which, to my great regret, I am obliged to describe to you.

With this generous people our heroes reposed from the toils they had undergone, every one being now permitted to think only of his re-establishment. Cortez alone, although he had fought and suffered more than any other, could think neither of repose nor refreshment. Overwhelmed with cares and inquietude his active spirit revolved new projects for the future; and he had soon the satisfaction of learning that fortune was not yet weary of favouring his audacity; for she sent him, by means wholly unexpected, a reinforcement at a time when it could never have been more necessary.

Valasquez, Governor of *Cuba*, of whom we have before spoken, was so far from thinking that Narvaez with the force he had confided to him could have been defeated, that soon after, without waiting for any intelligence, he dispatched two other vessels with
all

all sorts of ammunition for war, and with new instructions. These sailed right for *Vera Cruz*; and the officer who commanded there had the address to intice them into the port, when without difficulty he seized them, the crews being easily persuaded to serve under Cortez; but this was not all fortune had resolved in behalf of her favourite, for shortly after three more considerable vessels appeared on the coast.

Mathias. Were they also sent by Valasquez?

The Father. No: They were part of a squadron which the Governor of Jamaica had equipped and sent out to make new discoveries; but the chiefs of the enterprize had unfortunately directed their course toward the northern provinces of the Empire of Mexico, where the inhabitants were as poor as they were courageous, and had so ill received them, that after a long chain of misfortunes they thought themselves happy to gain the port of *Vera Cruz*. These also were prevailed on to serve under Cortez; so that the reinforcement he received in men and ammunition was so considerable, that the loss he had sustained was almost wholly repaired.

He now found himself possessed of a suffi-

cient force to resume his former project of making the conquest of the whole empire of Mexico; his faithful allies the Tlascalans, and other hordes of Indians, who were also his friends, having increased his army by sending him a reinforcement of ten thousand men.

Theophilus. Now he has so powerful an army he will find little difficulty in subduing the Mexicans.

The Father. Do not say so, Theophilus. The Mexicans have now an Emperor deficient neither in spirit nor valour, and, you will find, have assumed quite another character.

John. Is it the same they elected upon the death of Montezuma?

The Father. No: the brave Quetlavaca, who in person commanded the Mexican army on *The Night of Desolation*, was no more.

Peter. Oh, father! was he also killed?

The Father. No: he lived some time after the deliverance of his capital, and was employing himself in establishing the wisest regulations for keeping the oppressors of his country for ever at a distance from the city, when he suddenly became the victim of a disease never before known in America, and

which is certainly among the great evils the Europeans brought into that hemisphere.

Nicholas. What disease was it, father?

The Father. The small-pox; a malady till then totally unknown in America, and which about that time began to make the most dreadful ravages among the inhabitants. Quetlavaca sunk under it, and a near relative of Montezuma named Guatimozin was elected Emperor in his stead.

John. Was he as courageous as the former?

The Father. He was a man of distinguished bravery; had besides an excellent understanding, and great generosity. He continued vigorously to pursue the plans of defence formed by his predecessor, and, from the instant that he learnt the enemy were making new preparations, collected from all parts of the empire a prodigious number of warriors into the capital, and with these resolutely determined to defend himself to the last extremity.

Cortez, informed of these preparations, was fully sensible of the difficulties and perils he had to surmount; but he had been long ac-

customed to oppose obstacles and dangers with a courage nothing could intimidate. With his usual coolness and intrepidity he therefore put himself at the head of his now considerably augmented army, and marched ——— But he shall not proceed till to-morrow.

DIALOGUE XIII.

THEOPHILUS. Now, dear father!

The Father. What, already? ——— Cortez at the head of his army marched to *Mexico*. As he drew near the city of *Tezeuco* he met several ambassadors with the symbols of peace; these in the name of the Cacique gave him the most pressing invitation to enter and pass the night in the city, adding, every thing should be done to procure him and his people the necessary accommodations. To this invitation was however joined the request that he would encamp his Indian auxiliaries without

out the town. As there were reasons to suspect the sincerity of this Cacique's professions, though Cortez availed himself of his invitation, he at the same time resolved to employ all the precautions possible, and to defer till the next day their entry into the city. This happy delay preserved the lives of the Spaniards, and of their penetrating chief; for the following morning the city was found deserted, a dead silence reigned in every part, and it was not till Cortez had ordered their dwellings to be occupied by his troops, and had arranged the remainder in the great square, that some of the natives ventured to appear. From these they learnt that the Cacique had made every preparation to destroy the Spaniards the preceding night; but the delay of their entry, and the fear that his design was discovered, had induced him to give up his project and make his escape.

Cortez contented himself with punishing the Cacique for his artful fraud by deposing him, and nominating in his place one of the inhabitants whom his countrymen represented to him as the most deserving. This young man had something in his whole figure so prepossessing

possessing and noble, that Cortez at the first sight could not forbear giving him the strongest assurances of his friendship. The nomination of a new Cacique ensured him the advantage of reckoning the inhabitants of this considerable city among the number of his allies, as the governor, owing his elevation to him, must necessarily continue of his party as much from gratitude as from a regard to his own interests. For this reason Cortez resolved to make this city his principal quarters, till he had completed all the necessary preparations for the conquest of *Mexico*.

Ferdinand. What preparations were necessary? Could he not have gone directly to *Mexico*?

The Father. In that case he would probably have returned with shame and dishonour. No, Ferdinand; Cortez was certainly brave, but at the same time too prudent to attempt an impossibility. The Mexicans had now put their city in a good posture of defence; they had prudently destroyed all the bridges of the dykes, and in the apertures had erected strong bastions and parapets to prevent the enemy making use of their portable bridges.

The

The wise Guatimozin had besides armed his numerous foldiers with bows and long pikes, that they might be able to defend themselves at a great distance; but what Cortez considered more formidable than all the rest, was a number of canoes or barks, from which they could on both sides annoy the Spaniards if they attempted to pass the narrow causeways. From all this he was sensible he must not think of the conquest of this now strong city, before he had a fleet of small vessels, by means of which he could disperse the canoes, and sustain the attack of the causeways. But how was such a fleet to be constructed? He had not more than two or three carpenters in his suite, and the wood that was necessary for the purpose could be procured only from the forests of *Tlascala*; besides which, his whole army would not have been sufficient to transport it from thence to *Tezeuco*. But the greater difficulties this extraordinary man had to encounter, the more ardent was his desire of surmounting them. His resolution therefore was immediately taken. He employed a great number of Tlascalans under his carpenters to assist them in hewing the timber, and

and preparing the necessary materials, during which he endeavoured to make himself master of the environs of *Mexico*, in order to cut off all supplies of provisions from this unfortunate city. Some of the neighbouring towns he subdued by force, and others were induced by more gentle means to form an alliance with him. Guatimozin beheld with inquietude and chagrin this disaffection of his perfidious vassals, and took all possible measures to prevent the consequences. His efforts were ineffectual, but his great soul continued not less firm in the resolution of defending to the last drop of his blood the capital of his ruined kingdom. During this interval an unexpected danger hung over Cortez, which had it not been averted would have put a dreadful end not only to his enterprise but to his life itself. The project was already ripe, and twenty-four hours only was wanting to its execution.

Some of the Children. Oh, poor Cortez!

The Father. Ignorant till now of his danger, you will find, when I have drawn aside the veil that concealed it, that the exertion of all his prudence and fortitude was necessary

fary to extricate him. The soldiers of Narvaez, as I have already said, had voluntarily ranged themselves under Cortez's standard; but their view in this was the hope that he would in a short time, and with little danger, put them in possession of immense treasures. The disappointment of their hopes, and the consideration of the perils they foresaw in the assault of *Mexico*, inspired them with dissatisfaction toward their General, and repentance for having consented to follow him. Among the malcontents was one Villefagna, a common soldier, who was extremely enterprising, possessed of great cunning, and had ever been a secret partisan of Valasquez. This wretch profited by the general dissatisfaction of his comrades to form a project which aimed at nothing less than the massacre of the General and his principal officers, and the electing of a new commander, who should reconduct them to *Cuba*. To execute this plan, it was resolved to deliver a pretended packet of letters from Spain, by the way of *Vera Cruz*, to Cortez, as he was seated at table with his principal officers. The conspirators were then, under pretence of hearing news from their

their country, to rush into the apartment, and, while Cortez was employed in opening the packet, suddenly to fall upon him and dispatch him with the other officers, who were the destined victims. All was ready for the execution of this murderous design; the day preceding that appointed for the massacre was arrived; and the conspirators, whose number was considerable, had made their preparations with such secrecy and precaution, that neither Cortez nor his friends had the least suspicion. Evening approached; darkness veiled the last meeting of the murderers, and concealed from every eye the horrid action they had resolved to perpetrate. He alone to whom darkness itself is light, and whose penetrating eye pierces into the most hidden recesses of the human heart, beheld the sanguinary purpose; at his glance the veil was removed, and the horrible conspiracy stood revealed in open day. One of the conspirators, who had been among the first companions of Cortez, was suddenly seized with terror and compunction. The nearer the hour approached that was appointed for the massacre of his General, formerly so beloved,

the

the more painful were his sensations; he endeavoured to stifle them, and to combat the reflections that tormented him: but all was in vain; his awakened conscience had taken the alarm, and suffered him to have no rest till he had entered the chamber of his General, and made a voluntary confession of the whole conspiracy.

Cortez was struck with astonishment; but accustomed to take his measures suddenly and courageously, his plan was immediately formed. Accompanied by some of his officers he went instantly to the quarter of Villafagna, who was in such confusion at his presence, so unexpected in that place and at that time, that he was unable either to deny his black design or to urge any thing in his defence. Cortez immediately ordered him to be arrested, and tore from his bosom a paper, which as he supposed related to the conspiracy. He retired on one side to peruse it, and found it to be a list of the conspirators, in which were inserted names which filled him with astonishment and alarm. Prudence induced him to stifle this list, and to pretend that all the conspirators were unknown to him.

him. He confined himself therefore to punishing the chief; and as the confession of his crime rendered more ample information useless, he was the same evening hanged before the building in which he was confined.

The next morning Cortez assembled his whole army, when it is natural to suppose that the guilty were in the utmost trepidation and alarm. Cortez with his usual confidence and composure advanced into the midst of them, and recounted to them the perfidy of Villafagna, and the punishment he had drawn upon himself; but at the same time added, that notwithstanding all his endeavours he had not been able to discover who were his accomplices, the criminal having, even under the torture, preserved the most obstinate silence. With respect to himself, he assured them he rejoiced in this circumstance, as it would have been painful to him to deliver more of his companions into the hands of justice: he however concluded his discourse with a request, that they would inform him by what means he had been so unfortunate as to incur the displeasure of his comrades, that he might instantly endeavour to repair the fault.

These

These words dissipated the fears of the guilty ; as if a weight had been removed from their hearts, they began to revive, and the joy of being undiscovered inspired them with the resolution of remaining faithful to their General on every future occasion. Thus Cortez, by wisely moderating his anger, preserved a great part of his troops, and acquired as many faithful soldiers as he had before traitors in his army. But as his knowledge of the human heart rendered him sensible that indolence commonly corrupts even the best men, he resolved to busy those turbulent spirits that were now known to him in a new occupation, which should leave them no leisure for the fabrication of seditious plots. Fortune presented him with a favourable opportunity : information was brought him that materials for thirteen brigantines were ready, and it only remained to transport them from *Tlascala* to *Tzeuco*. Their conveyance could not be accomplished but by the Indian carriers ; and on account of the Mexicans, who scourged the country, a strong guard of soldiers was necessary to protect them. To this post Cortez destined the repentant criminals, under

under the command of Sandoval, upon whose vigilance, courage, and fidelity he could place the firmest reliance.

This march proved one of the most singular and toilsome that had ever been performed; eight hundred *Tamenes*, laden with beams, masts, cordage, sails, and old iron, were in the centre: the advanced guard, the rear guard, and the support of the flanks or sides, were composed of a body of fifteen thousand Tlascalans, among whom were distributed the Spanish soldiers, who were to keep them in order, and accustom them to march regularly. The entire band occupied above the space of a mile: Sandoval placed himself at their head, and confided the command of the rear guard to a young Tlascalan, named Chechimical.

Peter, interrupting his father. Where is Xicotencatl? It is long since we have heard any thing of him.

The Father. Xicotencatl is no more.

The Children. Oh, father!

The Father. It is even so. That haughty young warrior was unable to support the idea of becoming subservient to a stranger; he probably

probably penetrated deeper than his countrymen, and foresaw that the alliance his nation had concluded with the Spaniards would in the end be changed into slavery. With this idea, when Cortez returned to *Tlascala*, he raised a party against him; but his plan failed of success, for his own countrymen arrested him, and his father, a second Brutus, pronounced sentence of death on him, and delivered him to the Spanish General to execute this severe judgment. Cortez was, however, in this instance too humane to permit the blood of this youthful patriot, the son of his ancient and respected friend, to be shed on his account; he not only pardoned and set him at liberty, but made him a companion in his march to *Mexico*. This lenity was unable to bend the haughty spirit of Xicotencatl; he continued on the contrary to declaim against the enterprise of the Spaniards with the freedom of a republican, and to excite his countrymen to revolt. In consequence of this he was accused at the Supreme Council of the Tlascalans, who caused Cortez to be informed, that he who endeavoured to excite an army to rebel against its chief incurred

incurred the sentence of death by the laws of his country ; that it depended therefore wholly on him to put them in force against the rebel Xicotencatl, for that when he returned to *Tlascala* he would certainly undergo the same sentence. Cortez, however, once more resolved to use gentle means, and accordingly sent to entreat this headstrong young chief to come to him, and in person inform him of the injuries he complained of, as he was ready to redress them. Xicotencatl would not even listen to this message ; and Cortez having sent the guard to bring him by force, he defended himself till covered with wounds he fell dead to the earth. Such was the tragical end of a man, who, differently situated, would perhaps have become a Hannibal or a Cæsar.

The Children. Oh, what a pity !

The Father. Young Chechimical, of whom I before spoke, was nearly of the same stamp. Passionate and bold as Xicotencatl, with equal pride and obstinacy, he possessed in addition a considerable degree of ostentatious vanity, which excited his resentment against Sandoval for having given him the command of the rear guard.

guard. Such a general as himself he conceived should always be foremost to animate the whole army by his example. He did not only pretend to be the first at the assault of *Mexico*, but in all less affairs hoped to have had the precedence. It was in vain represented to him that the post Sandoval had confided to him was one of the most important, as an attack was more to be feared in the rear than in the van. He was still dissatisfied, till Sandoval himself, from an indulgent complaisance to his pride and obstinacy, consented to share with him the command of the rear guard.

During a march of fifteen miles through craggy and mountainous roads, frequent bands of Mexican soldiers appeared to harass and interrupt their progress; but seeing they were on all sides prepared to receive them, they each time withdrew without attempting to come to action. At length Sandoval had the satisfaction, after a march of extreme labour and fatigue, to arrive happily with his singular caravan at *Tezeuco*, where his general received him with open arms.

When they drew near *Tezeuco*, Chechimi-

cal desired his army to halt a short time; but I am sure you will be surprised to hear that this delay was requested merely that he might put on his best plumes, and other warlike ornaments. "Since we are soon to fight," said he, "it behoves me as a brave soldier to appear as well dressed as if I were going to a wedding." When these ostentatious fooleries were reported to Cortez, he formed no very elevated idea of the spirit or understanding of this young warrior; for he justly conceived that true courage, as well as all true merit, is ever modest and unassuming. Indeed history makes no mention of the exploits of this bragging hero.

While the workmen were employed in the construction of the brigantines, another happy event occurred which caused universal joy in the camp of the besiegers. Cortez had, for some time previous to the present, dispatched several officers to *Hispaniola*, in order, if possible, to obtain supplies from thence. Their return had been long in vain expected, when the joyful news was spread that four vessels from *Hispaniola* were arrived at *Vera Cruz* with a reinforcement, consisting of

of two hundred soldiers, eighty-horses, two pieces of cannon, and a great quantity of ammunition. You may easily represent to yourselves the joy that Cortez and his companions must have felt on this occasion.

The construction of the brigantines was now carried on with the greatest vigour. The Mexicans had several times made attempts to impede it, and to burn the vessels on the stocks; but the vigilance of Cortez, and the bravery of his troops, rendered their efforts fruitless.

At length the work was completed; the ships were launched with the greatest solemnity; and the wind beginning to fill their sails, the spectators burst into acclamations of joy, which announced the important event to all the environs. Their eyes were alternately fixed on the vessels in full sail, and on the extraordinary man, who, notwithstanding all obstacles, had rendered himself master of the lake, the greatest bulwark of the besieged capital.

Cortez now resolved to attack the city at the same time on three sides. He therefore divided his army into as many columns: San-
doval

doval was nominated leader of the first, Alvarado received the command of the second, and Olid of the third. The first was to advance from *Tezeuco*, and the second from *Cujocan*, towards the causeways which from these places led to *Mexico*; while Cortez with the vessels, which he resolved to command himself, was to support their attacks.

Each at the time appointed marched to the post assigned him. In the way Alvarado and Olid destroyed an aqueduct, constructed with considerable skill, and by which the Mexicans had the address to convey to their city, surrounded as it was by the lake, fresh water from the mountains several miles distant; and the want of water, which followed the destruction of this aqueduct, was the first of the evils against which the unfortunate inhabitants had to struggle. From this time a day did not pass unmarked by some sanguinary scene. The brigantines had to oppose a prodigious fleet of canoes; and the land army of the enemy, which were stationed on the causeways, were as formidable from their numbers as from their courage, and the obstinacy of their resistance. The slight canoes were indeed

indeed soon dispersed or sunk; but the victory was not so easily gained in the attack on the causeways. It is true, the Spaniards every day, at the expence of infinite fatigue and danger, carried some of the bastions, which the Mexicans had raised in order to protect the chasms, and replaced them by their portable bridges; but as the sad remembrance of *the night of desolation* obliged them every evening to retire to firm land, the besieged during the night expeditiously repaired such of the fortifications as had been destroyed during the day; so that, notwithstanding all the blood that was shed, they were not one day further advanced than another, and the daily fatigues of the Spaniards and their allies were so great, that there was danger of their sinking by degrees under them. Such was the state of things when Cortez, extremely mortified at the ill success of his arms, roused all his courage, and formed a resolution, which, if successful, must inevitably end in the ruin of the enemy or himself. In what this resolution consisted, and what were its dreadful consequences, I shall, with your permission, defer till to-morrow.

Theophilus. Oh dear, dear father!—only this once—

To-morrow! repeated their father, and the recital concluded for that day.

DIALOGUE XIV.

THE next day, at the usual hour, all the young people seated themselves with the utmost impatience in deep silence expecting, from the conclusion of the last conversation, that something great and remarkable would be related. This idea was strengthened by the air of importance with which their father, without speaking, took his seat among them. Every eye was fixed on him, and silence reigned universally throughout the little assembly. At length he addressed them in these words: It is with reason, my children, that you expect the recital of great events; but do not suppose they are such as will afford you

you pleasure: on the contrary, I am still under the necessity of describing to you some scenes that will make your heart bleed, and others that will cause you to shudder with horror and affright. I am sorry to observe that this is what you must expect; but oh! my children, when humanity draws from your young eyes the tear of pity, in that moment silently renew the promise you have made, to exert all your powers, when you shall become men, to lessen calamity, restrain violence, prevent the effusion of blood, and ultimately to contribute to the establishment of tranquillity, peace, and justice among your brethren*. But to return to my history—Cortez resolving by a single stroke to put an end to this long and toilsome war, disposed all in readiness to give a general assault the next day. He ordered each commander to penetrate with his corps into the besieged city, and

* Oh, young Princes! you who are hereafter to become Sovereigns and Commanders of Armies, would that my feeble efforts could engrave this truth on your hearts, that of all you possess human blood is the most precious! for surely God will require of you a just account of every brother entrusted, by his wisdom, to your care.

there to keep his post ; and placed himself at the head of those who were to attack the causeway of *Cujocan*, firmly resolved, at what price soever, to cut his way through every obstacle.

At length the terrible day appeared ; each commander advanced at the head of his corps, and the bloody scene began. Nothing could exceed the fury with which the Spaniards assaulted, or the obstinate resistance of the Mexicans. The band which Cortez in person conducted especially, enflamed by the example of their general, performed prodigies of valour : all obstacles were fruitless ; they penetrated from one aperture to another, carried bastion after bastion, pierced the thickest ranks, trod down all before them, and at length pursued the enemy into the very centre of the city. But although Cortez with his valiant band was borne, as it were by an impetuous wind, on the wings of victory, he preserved sufficient presence of mind to secure a certain retreat in case the fortune of war should change. With this view he had appointed Julian d'Aldrete, an officer lately arrived from *Hispaniola* with the reinforcements,

ments, to remain stationed near the chafms of the causeways, which he was to occupy with his foldiers while Cortez and his men pressed forward to the combat.

Unfortunately, the false ambition of this officer inspired him with the idea that it was derogatory from his courage to execute a commission exempt from peril, while his comrades were acquiring laurels in the field; he therefore, disregarding the orders of his general, rushed into the thickest of the fight to share with them the honour and danger of the action. Guatimozin, informed of this circumstance, was transported at the imprudence of the enemy, from which he clearly saw he could derive a signal advantage. He immediately commanded several considerable bands to march by different indirect ways to the chafms of the causeways, which d'Aldrete and his men had abandoned, to enlarge them as much as possible, and to take entire possession of them. The other troops, who were engaged with the Spaniards at the entrance of the city, he commanded by degrees to retreat, in order to draw the heat of the battle into the interior of the city. His stratagem suc-

ceeded; for Cortez, relying on the execution of his orders, hesitated not to pursue the enemy from street to street, and at length reached the place where Guatimozin waited for him with the choicest of his warriors. On a sudden, from the top of the principal temple, which was near, the solemn sound of the drum, sacred to the God of War, was heard; a well-known signal, which, every time it was beat, inspired the Americans with inconceivable courage, and an absolute contempt of death. In an instant the Spaniards found themselves so vigorously attacked on all sides, that notwithstanding their bravery, and knowledge of the military art, they could not long resist so unequal a force. They began to give way; first in small bands, retreating slowly, and still defending themselves: but as the number of the enemy every instant increased, and their attacks became each time more furious, they by degrees redoubled their pace, and thought more of insuring their safety by flight than by defence. Their ranks were now broken—Spaniards and Tlascalans, foot and horse, fled in disorder toward the nearest chasm of the causeway, which, to
their

their great astonishment, they did not find guarded, as they expected, by their own men, but occupied by the enemy.

In vain Cortez had recourse to commands and entreaties to stop the general disorder, and rally his men. They no longer saw or heard more than their danger, each individual striving to effect his own preservation in the best way he was able. They leaped by whole troops from the causeway into the chasm, where numbers were buried in the waves; and the enemy hastening thither with their canoes, the remainder were killed or taken prisoner; for, unfortunately, the water of the lake in this part was too shallow for the brigantines to come to their assistance. It is impossible to describe the feelings of Cortez on perceiving the extremity to which his people were reduced; their danger made him totally forgetful of himself, and wholly unmindful of his personal safety. Divided by their pressing danger, he one moment strove to save a drowning companion, and the next to rescue another from the hands of the enemy, when suddenly—I tremble to relate it—he was seized by three Mexican Captains——

The Children. O, father!

The Father. And borne away in triumph.

The Children. Dreadful!

The Father. Two of his officers seeing their General dragged thus ignominiously along resolved to rescue him, or perish in the attempt. They rushed into the midst of the enemy, attacked those who held their commander, stretched them lifeless on the ground, and were themselves slain——But Cortez escaped.

The Children. What generous fellows!

The Father. Yes, Cortez escaped; though in a pitiable situation, and with the loss of his men. A thousand Tlascalans, and more than sixty Spaniards, had been either killed or made prisoners, and scarcely one of those who had escaped but was wounded. The heart of Cortez bled for these calamities; but his compassion and grief were speedily changed into horror and alarm by a new scene still more dreadful.

Night no sooner approached than the Spaniards perceived the whole city illuminated, while the sound of warlike instruments and the ferocious exclamations of the vanquishers announced that they were preparing to celebrate

brate the barbarous festival of their triumph. The illumination of the principal temple was such, that the multitude assembled could clearly be distinguished, and also the preparation of the priests for the massacre of the prisoners; a sight to which the imagination of the Spaniards added new horrors. Among the victims they fancied they could distinguish their unfortunate companions by the colour of their skins, beheld them as they were constrained to dance before the hideous idols to which they were going to be sacrificed, and discerned even the voices of their friends, in the cries of the unfortunate whom they saw dragged to the altar to be immolated. The most insensible grew pale at this horrid spectacle, and Cortez himself vented his grief in a copious flood of tears.

Mathias. Oh, those abominable Mexicans! I shall never again have compassion for them!

Theophilus. Nor I, if they are hewn in pieces.

The Mother. What, so cruel, Theophilus?

Theophilus. Yes, dear mother. Why were they so cruel as to kill their fellow-creatures, and eat them like beef or mutton?

The

The Mother. Is it not a great misfortune for these poor ignorant creatures to have been bred up in the practice of a religion which not only permitted but even enjoined these cruelties as a duty?

Theophilus. Yes——but still——

The Father. Patience, my children, and the indignation you feel will soon be converted into a compassion equally just: at present, attend to the conclusion of my melancholy history. The situation of Cortez was on a sudden become one of the most dangerous. The spirits of his soldiers were uncommonly depressed, and his enemies were inspired with additional courage; their confidence even went so far, that the next morning they made a sortie, and ventured to attack the general quarter—where the Spaniards and their allies with great difficulty repulsed them; but they had still more to fear the consequence of a military stratagem devised by Guatimozin. He sent the heads of the Spaniards, who had been slain, into the neighbouring provinces, and caused it to be proclaimed that the blood of their enemies, whom he had sacrificed, had appeased the anger of the God of war, who had
should

declared that these odious intruders should be all destroyed in the space of eight days. This news caused a sudden defection of all the Indians in alliance with the Spaniards. Their superstition not suffering them for an instant to doubt that the menace of their God of war could fail of its effect, they hastened to dissolve all connection with a people whom Heaven itself had doomed to destruction. Even the Tlascalans began to grow cool and desert them; but Cortez, who knew how to turn every circumstance to his advantage, instantly devised means to prevent the general disaffection of his allies. He forbade all acts of hostility during eight days, covered his well entrenched army by the brigantines, and waited tranquilly till the expiration of the term, which Guatimozin had imprudently determined, and fixed at too short a date. The time predicted for the entire destruction of the Spaniards elapsed, and they remained in perfect security. The eyes of the allies therefore were immediately opened; they saw clearly they had been deceived, blushed at their credulity, and returned to the Spaniards more resolute than ever to assist them to overthrow

throw the detested Empire of Mexico. Others who really considered the false oracle as a decree of their God of war, now imagined that their idols, to confirm the downfall of the Mexicans and render it more inevitable, had purposely buoyed them up with deceitful hopes. These also came over to the Spaniards; so that the number of the old and new allies was so great, that Cortez in a few days beheld himself at the head of an army consisting of an hundred and fifty thousand Indians:—another example of the rapidity with which good and ill fortune frequently succeed each other.

So little did Cortez suffer himself to be elated by this astonishing increase of his power, that from this moment he became more than ever resolved to act with prudence and circumspection. He even renewed (to the honour of his heart be it spoken) the overtures of peace which had already been several times made to the Mexicans; but Guatimozin, fully convinced that all connection with the Spaniards must end in his own and the slavery of his people, rejected with contempt every proposal of accommodation, firmly

firmly resolved to deliver his country, or to sacrifice his life in the attempt. Hostilities were therefore recommenced; and Cortez, finding himself sufficiently strong to block up the city, took his measures so effectually that all supplies were cut off; in consequence of which a dreadful famine, accompanied, as is usually the case, with a pestilence, ensued, and the poor inhabitants thus pressed on all sides were carried off by hundreds. Cortez in the meanwhile advanced every day nearer the city, by the causeways of which I have lately spoken, and, agreeably to the new plan he had adopted, took the precaution, as he drove out the enemy, to occupy the chasms by the auxiliary troops, that he might not a second time incur the danger of being obstructed in his retreat. The Spaniards had already reached the city by three passes, yet still the valiant Guatimozin continued to dispute the ground with them inch by inch with unshaken firmness; but the Spaniards, continuing still to press forward, set fire to all the parts of the city they had carried, and established themselves by entrenchments. The great square was fixed on as the general place of rendezvous for the
three

three columns. Alvarado attained it first; and Cortez, who had placed himself at the head of the band led by Olid, arrived there soon after, and joined in the pursuit of the Mexicans, who fled before the column of Alvarado already arranged in order for battle. Sandoval was equally active, and a dreadful carnage ensued. The Spaniards had already carried and reduced three parts of the city to ashes; and Guatimozin, with the flower of his army, had fortified himself in the quarter that remained. The Spaniards were preparing to render themselves masters of that also; but Cortez, who was desirous of putting an end to the massacre, and who flattered himself with the hope that the perseverance of Guatimozin was nearly exhausted, forbade his army to attempt new hostilities, and once more renewed the propositions of peace, so often rejected. Guatimozin appeared inclined to accept them, and there followed, without any express agreement, a suspension of arms for three days. In this interval the two parties were separated only by a single fosse; but perfect tranquillity reigned on both sides, except that a Mexican would sometimes take a fancy

fancy to play the hero, and advance without the intrenchment to insult the Spaniards by threats and menaces. The greater part of these braggarts were punished for their insolence with contempt, but some in a more energetic manner. One among them especially experienced this. Armed with the sword and buckler of a Spaniard who had been sacrificed, he advanced like another Goliath, and, planting himself between the two armies, in the most opprobrious terms openly defied the Spaniards to combat. Several testified a desire of punishing his audacity; but Cortez restrained them, and contented himself with causing this Quixote to be told by their interpreter, that if he would bring ten others like himself he would permit a lad whom he pointed out to chastise them. The young man alluded to was Marcado, page to Cortez, and about sixteen years of age. This contemptuous refusal of his challenge having incensed the Mexican still more, he renewed his defiance; and Marcado considering the affair as his own, since the General had expressly nominated him, without uttering a word leaped out of the ranks, and, running strait to the bravado,

vado, attacked him with such fury, that he soon extended him lifeless upon the earth. His spirit was highly applauded; and when he returned to lay the sword and buckler of the enemy at the feet of his master, Cortez embraced him with joy, and, as a recompense of his valour, with his own hands girded on him the sword he had conquered.

During this time Guatimozin amused the Spaniards from day to day with the assurance that he would himself come in person to treat with them on the conditions of peace; but this was merely a pretext, by which he hoped to lull their vigilance and conceal his real intention. At the earnest entreaty of his nobles, he had suffered himself at length to be prevailed on to preserve his person, by flight, from the inevitable dangers of death or slavery, and to go into the more distant provinces of the Empire to raise a new army, with which he might be able to make head against the enemy. All the necessary preparations were made to favour his escape. The Mexican chiefs, ready to sacrifice their lives for the salvation of their prince, went on board a number of canoes, which were kept ready,

ready, and vigorously attacked the brigantines; while Guatimozin, the sole object of their anxious cares, was to evade them on the lake. In vain Sandoval, who had then the command of the brigantines, endeavoured to repulse them by the fire of his artillery; death and wounds were equally despised; they intrepidly rowed up to him, and forced him with the greatest obstinacy to come to action. But now Sandoval suddenly perceived on the lake some canoes, which were by dint of oars urged on with the greatest celerity, and, suspecting their importance, immediately gave chase to them. Holguin, whose brigantine was the swiftest sailer, reached them first; but it was no sooner perceived that he meant to come to hostilities than the rowers stopped, and the soldiers throwing down their arms joined them in conjuring the Spaniards with tears to spare the life of their Emperor. Transported with the advantage fortune had given him, Holguin leaped sword in hand into the canoe, where he distinguished the unfortunate monarch by the respect his suite testified for him. Guatimozin advanced toward him with a noble and undaunted air; told him he was

his prisoner, and ready to follow him, and that he only requested his wife and her companions might be treated with the respect due to them. Then turning toward his wife he spoke some words of consolation to her, and gave his hand to Holguin to be conducted into the brigantine. This event decided the fate of the whole empire of Mexico, which in the person of its sovereign fell into the hands of the Spaniards: it happened August 13th, 1521. Holguin with all speed conveyed his illustrious prisoner to Cortez, who on this important intelligence advanced to meet the royal captive, whom he received on the bank of the lake with all the respect due to his rank and valour. The unfortunate Guatimozin appeared to experience a degree of pleasure from this polite attention of his vanquisher, and followed him with dignity to his quarter. After seating himself for a few moments he rose, and by the aid of an interpreter addressed Cortez in these words: "I have done what my duty required; my cares are now unavailing, and a prisoner of my rank must be a charge to his vanquisher. Let this poniard then (laying his hand on that Cor-
tez

tez wore) be buried in my heart, and rid me of a life no longer honourable to myself or useful to my subjects." The affliction of his wife, who on these words broke into open exclamations of sorrow, rendered it a scene truly affecting. Cortez was moved, and endeavoured to console the unfortunate pair; after which he left them to give free vent to their grief, on which he justly conceived his presence might be a restraint. Oh that this sentiment of humanity had never forsaken him! But, alas, my children, I must again present you with a terrible example of that degeneracy into which great, and in some respects good men may fall when corrupted by prosperity. Hear then of what the brave Cortez was capable, and let the errors of his conduct ever prove to you an alarming and salutary caution. When it was known that Guatimozin was taken, the Mexicans threw down their arms, and the Spaniards remained entire masters of the city.

The first days were passed by the Spaniards in the intoxication of joy caused by the success of their enterprize; but soon their mirth was converted into murmurs and discontent,
on

on perceiving the moderate booty which was to be the recompense of the many toils and dangers they had undergone. The greater part of the houses, with the treasure they contained, had become a prey to the flames; and from the instant Guatimozin had entertained doubts concerning the possibility of saving the capital, he had caused all the precious articles of the imperial treasury to be thrown into the lake; at least he was accused of having done so. The booty therefore was so trifling, that several Spaniards rejected with contempt the share allotted them. All murmured loudly against Guatimozin; nor did their General escape, whom they had the presumption to accuse of having kept back the greatest part of the treasures.

Cortez in vain essayed every effort to appease them: Aldrete, who was nominated Treasurer Royal, appeared at the head of the malecontents, and in virtue of his office demanded that the Emperor and his first minister should be delivered up to them, that they might oblige them to confess into what part of the lake the treasure had been thrown. Though Cortez had before sustained a similar storm,

storm, he was now weak or rather inhuman enough to yield to the desires of these barbarians, and Guatimozin and his faithful minister were—put to the torture.

[*The feelings of the Children obliged their father to pause for some minutes, after which he continued.*]

Let us pass over, my children, as quick as possible a scene so repugnant to humanity. Guatimozin with admirable fortitude supported all the torments his executioners were capable of inflicting. His minister imitated his example; but his cruel persecutors urging his torments beyond the power of human nature to bear, (it is said they stretched him on a gridiron over burning coals,) he gave a violent shriek, and at the same time turned his eyes upon his master as if to demand the permission of confessing what he knew. Guatimozin comprehended this glance, and replied with unshaken serenity, "*Am I on a bed of roses?*" These words pierced the heart of the faithful minister; not another syllable could his torments extort; he expired in the presence of his master with the fortitude of a hero, and the resignation of a saint.

Cortez, who from afar heard the shriek of the expiring minister, ran to the place, penetrated with repentance and shame, and happily arrived in time to preserve the life of the tortured prince ; but, alas !——Enough however for to-day ; we have already dwelt too long on a subject of so much horror.

DIALOGUE XV.

THE Father. Once more, my children, I draw aside the curtain in order to represent to you the last scene of the cruel tragedy of *Mexico* ; after which we will let it drop.

Some of the Children. It is not yet finished, father ?

The Father. Not quite ; but we draw very near the conclusion. All the provinces of the empire in a short time underwent the fate of the capital ; they submitted one after the other, and their unfortunate inhabitants experienced the same rigour which during
1 twenty

twenty years had harassed and destroyed the natives of the isles of *America*; they were subdued, oppressed by every possible means, and inhumanly slaughtered: you will, I trust, dispense with a circumstantial detail of all the acts of injustice committed with respect to them.

Cortez, in the mean time, had not received any answer from *Spain*, and was in consequence still uncertain what sentiments were entertained concerning the conduct he had pursued. At length a vessel arrived in the port of *Vera Cruz*, having on board a person, named *Tapia*, sent—can you guess for what purpose, my children?

John. To bring Cortez the patents to constitute him Governor of *Mexico*, I suppose.

The Father. No; he was sent to depose Cortez, arrest him, to bring him to trial, and to take his place.

Ferdinand. Oh, that was terrible indeed.

The Father. It was, without doubt, a treatment very severe and ungrateful; but to judge according to the rigour of the laws, how does it appear? Had not Cortez offended against the laws, and merited punishment?—But

we are not set up to pronounce upon the conduct of kings and their officers; there is a judge whom they cannot escape, and it is before him it will be decided whether or not *Spain* was unjust to Cortez. Fortunately for him, the person chosen for his judge was extremely weak and timid; the artful Cortez therefore contrived to embarrass him with so many difficulties, and to present to his pusillanimous soul so many obstacles to alarm, that he considered it as the safest way to return without executing his commission. The storm that threatened Cortez was however only averted for a short time: he was sensible of this, and, to free himself from the inquietude, again sent a messenger to *Spain* to the Emperor Charles the Fifth, who, you recollect, was also King of *Spain*.

The Children. Oh, yes, we remember.

The Father. Cortez, I repeat, sent a person on whom he could rely to the Emperor, to give a circumstantial detail of his actions, and at the same time to lay at his feet that part of the booty allotted to him. Hitherto the Emperor, engrossed by other cares, had remitted the examination of this affair to people who

who wished ill to Cortez; but he now judged it expedient to look into it himself. The glory of so many extraordinary actions, the grandeur and importance of the conquest made by Cortez, inspired this monarch with the most lively joy and astonishment; he approved all he had done, declared him Governor and Viceroy of *New Spain*, and at the same time appointed Commissioners to examine into the pretensions of Valasquez, Governor of *Cuba*. They (as it often happens) conformed their judgment to the inclination of their master. The complaints of Valasquez concerning the perfidy of Cortez, and his pretensions to the government of the countries conquered by the latter, were declared null; he was simply indemnified for the expences he had incurred in the last expedition; and, to the great humiliation of this ambitious man, the express prohibition was added, of never projecting any conquest without having first obtained the approbation of the king: a double affront, which so far exceeded the fortitude of the haughty and passionate Valasquez, that it cost him his life. Cortez was, on the contrary, at the height of

his wishes; but alas! why must I add that his virtue began to totter in proportion as his fortune strengthened? Willingly would I remain silent on the corruption of his heart, but the voice of outraged humanity exclaims too loudly for me longer to conceal it. Attend then to the detail, and lament with me the fall of a man whose distinguished qualities, while he had difficulties to combat, were firm as a rock in the midst of the sea, but were unable to resist the influence of a milder fate.

He began to rebuild *Mexico*, which promised to become the first city of *America*, and has continued so to the present time. To excite his officers to plough up the lands in the different provinces, he divided them into territories, and granted them over the natives the same tyrannic and absolute power which had been formerly usurped over the islanders, and they were equally oppressed and destroyed. The warlike character of this great and once powerful nation, however, rendered its entire subjection more difficult than might have been imagined: the natives several times attempted to break the bonds by which they were

were held in servitude, and to regain their freedom. Their oppressors considered these efforts as rebellion, which merited a punishment of the utmost rigour; and on these occasions exercised, if not by the express order of Cortez, at least with his consent, cruelties which fixed an eternal stain on the former glory of this hardy conqueror. For example, in the province of *Panuco* (which you see here on our map), these fiends in the human form caused sixty Caciques and four hundred noble Mexicans to be burnt alive at one time; and, to render the scene still more terrible, obliged the children and relations of the unfortunate men to be witnesses of the tragical execution.

The Children. Oh, wretches! barbarians!

The Father. Would it have been possible to believe that the inhuman pride of these victors, intoxicated with success, could have gone farther? Yet their cruelty did not end here. On a suspicion, founded upon very weak grounds, that Guatimozin favoured the revolt of his former subjects, and was endeavouring to escape from prison, this brave and generous Prince, with the Caciques of

Tezeuco and *Tacuba*, who, according to the order of their ancient dignity, were the next in rank to him, were brought to public execution, and hanged in the presence of the whole nation.

Charlotte. Oh, dear Papa, say no more of Cortez!

Frederic. I am like Charlotte; I detest him, since he is capable of acting with such inhumanity.

The Father. I, too, my children, feel so shocked at these atrocious acts, that I should here close my recital, if what I have further to add did not serve to convince us that such crimes rarely go unpunished, even in this life.—Some Spanish officers, who had been sent to *Mexico* to collect the revenues of the king, endeavoured, without any authority from the Court, to extend their power there, and to assume a judicial authority over the Viceroy himself. Cortez, who, we have already seen, was not formed to be sported with by men whom he considered in every respect inferior to himself, laughed at their feeble attempts to set limits to his jurisdiction, and continued to act as he thought proper; but the men whose
authority

authority he contemned had a formidable weapon which they resolved to employ against him: this was their pen, by the aid of which they remitted to the Court so disgusting a picture of Cortez, and of his tyrannic government, that it inspired both the King and his Ministers with suspicions that he was endeavouring to render himself independent. In consequence of this, they resolved to dispatch a Commissioner to *Mexico* to examine into the conduct of Cortez, with the power of sending him to *Spain* as he should judge proper. Cortez was at this time engaged in making preparations for a very hazardous expedition from *Mexico* to *Honduras* (look again at your first map), in order to subject that vast extent of territory to the Crown of *Spain*, and at the same time to punish Olid, who had revolted against him. In this expedition there appeared so much to suffer from hunger, the hostilities of the natives, and inconveniences of different kinds, that all Cortez had formerly endured appeared in comparison but a mere trifle.

In the mean time, the Commissioner appointed to examine into his conduct arrived,
but

but had scarcely disembarked when he felt sick and died. This event did not avert the threatened danger from Cortez; his enemies continued to remit to the Court of *Spain* reports to his disadvantage, which confirming the former suspicions, a new Commissioner was sent with still fuller powers to examine into his conduct, and punish him. Cortez, informed of what was transacting against him, was exasperated on seeing the great and painful services he had rendered his country thus requited. His friends strongly counselled him to avoid the shameful treatment that was preparing for him, by rendering himself independent, and endeavouring to repel force by force; but misfortune had in some measure recalled that greatness of soul, which the intoxication of success had for a time stifled, and he refused to take any step which could not be authorised by the fidelity and obedience due to his Sovereign; generously resolving rather to suffer the most ungrateful and injurious treatment, than to rebel against the legislative power of his country.

The Mother. It is well he has done something to reinstate him a little in our opinion.

The

The Father. The return of his virtue, and the severity of the mortifications he endured, will, I hope, in some measure obliterate the remembrance of his great defects, and lead you to mingle a degree of compassion with the just detestation you feel for his crimes. The high spirit of Cortez could not brook the thought of being tried as a wretched criminal in the very country which had been the scene of his victories; he resolved therefore to sail for *Spain* before the arrival of his judge, in order to submit the decision of his fate to the mercy and justice of his Sovereign.

When he appeared in *Spain*, all eyes were turned with respect and admiration on the extraordinary man, whose exploits appeared to eclipse the glory of the greatest heroes. The confidence with which he presented himself before his judge, at once dissipated all suspicions to his disadvantage. The King received him with marks of the most tender esteem, and of the highest gratitude, and loaded him with favours. He presented him with the collar of the Spanish Order, created him Count, and assigned him a considerable

fiderable extent of land in *New Spain*; but when the question was debated whether he should be confirmed in his government, it was evident it was considered as too dangerous to reinvest him with the power it was feared he had so greatly abused. All he could obtain was, the confirmation of his dignity of General, and the full power of making any new discovery; but with respect to what concerned the government of the country, and the administration of civil justice, a College was established, to which was given the title of *the Council of New Spain*.

Córtéz returned to *Mexico*; but from that period his life was one continued chain of chagrin and mortification. From the Members of the Council, who were joined with him in the administration of affairs, he experienced such repeated vexations, that to avoid them he again plunged into those perplexities and dangers inseparable from the reduction of unknown countries.

He equipped a squadron on the western coast of *Mexico*, in order to make discoveries in the Great Southern Ocean; and, after incredible fatigues and the greatest dangers, succeeded

succeeded in discovering the Peninsula of *California*, which joins *North America*. But I need not tell you where this peninsula is situated.

The Children, shewing it on the map. Oh, here it is!

John. This great gulf, which separates it from the Continent, is called the *Red Sea*.

The Father. It must not be confounded with the *Red Sea* between *Egypt* and *Arabia*. The *Red Sea* which separates the peninsula of which we speak from *America*, is now more frequently called the *Gulf of California*. But to proceed. As Cortez on his return from this painful expedition continued to experience the same vexations from the Council as before, he resolved, confident in the equity of his Sovereign, and relying on his former favour, to sail once more for *Spain*, in order to lay his complaints at the foot of the throne. Unfortunate man! little did he foresee the still more bitter mortifications to which he was on the point of exposing himself! His life having been always active and warlike, he had had little opportunity of observing the instability of a court, and how little the favour
of

of the Great is to be relied on. This to his astonishment he now experienced: he was coldly received, his complaints were heard with negligence, and his solicitations treated with contempt. As he was grown old, little service could be expected from his exertions, and this furnished an ample reason for neglecting him. What he had already done for the advantage of his King and his Country was either forgotten, or thought to have been sufficiently recompensed. To conclude, this great, this extraordinary man, at the end of his perilous career, found himself cast off, forgotten, and, like Columbus, obliged to sue for justice of an ungrateful Sovereign, and a capricious Minister. He passed six melancholy years in an employment so little congenial to his character and former manner of life; at the end of which, grief and vexation for such unworthy treatment put an end to his life. He died the 2d of December, 1547, in the sixty-second year of his age. His body, at his express command, was transported to *New Spain*—probably because he considered his country unworthy of receiving the remains of a benefactor she had so ungratefully recompensed.

The

The Children. What, is it finished already?

The Father. With respect to Cortez, entirely; but since my narrative appears to have interested you so greatly, perhaps I may inform myself of what, during this time, has been passing in another part of *America*, and if I meet with any thing worth recounting—

Theophilus. Oh, I can guess: we shall have Pizarro.

Frederic. Oh, Pizarro! Pizarro!

We shall see, replied the father—and with these words the assembly dispersed.

THE END OF CORTÉZ.

of the Great is to be relied on. This to his astonishment he now experienced: he was coldly received, his complaints were heard with negligence, and his solicitations treated with contempt. As he was grown old, little service could be expected from his exertions, and this furnished an ample reason for neglecting him. What he had already done for the advantage of his King and his Country was either forgotten, or thought to have been sufficiently recompensed. To conclude, this great, this extraordinary man, at the end of his perilous career, found himself cast off, forgotten, and, like Columbus, obliged to sue for justice of an ungrateful Sovereign, and a capricious Minister. He passed six melancholy years in an employment so little congenial to his character and former manner of life; at the end of which, grief and vexation for such unworthy treatment put an end to his life. He died the 2d of December, 1547, in the sixty-second year of his age. His body, at his express command, was transported to *New Spain*—probably because he considered his country unworthy of receiving the remains of a benefactor she had so ungratefully recompensed.

The

The Children. What, is it finished already?

The Father. With respect to Cortez, entirely; but since my narrative appears to have interested you so greatly, perhaps I may inform myself of what, during this time, has been passing in another part of *America*, and if I meet with any thing worth recounting—

Theophilus. Oh, I can guess: we shall have Pizarro.

Frederic. Oh, Pizarro! Pizarro!

We shall see, replied the father—and with these words the assembly dispersed.

THE END OF CORTÉZ.

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